No. 645 For Week Ending May 11th, 1901. (One Penny.

PEARSON'S SHORT STORIES.

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN.

H.M.S.

Digitized by Google

WHEN YOU ARE ENGAGED

in perusing the 200 pages of
H. SAMUEL'S CATALOGUE,
bear in mind the fact that H. SAMUEL can save you nearly Fifty per cent. on your outlay on Gold and Silver Watches, Diamonds, Jewellery, &c. Send a post-card To-day for

H. SAMUEL'S BARGAIN BOOK

Over 3,000 brilliant illustrations and descriptions, making its 200 pages gleam from end to end with such extraordinary value as to be almost incredible.

Free and Post Paid to any Address.

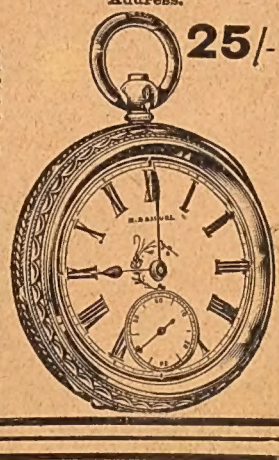
Preserve your integrity, and avoid the debt inviting instalment schemes by which you have to pay three times the value of the purchase. You pay once to H. Samuel on his safe cash system, and get the highest quality goods possible for your outlay, saving nearly Fifty per cent. when compared with ordinary shop prices.

A MONTH'S FREE TRIAL

is allowed with all goods.
A Post Office Order for **25s.** will bring you

H. Samuel's Lady's 'Acme' Watch

containing special inventions protected by **Royal Letters Patent**, and obtainable only in **H. Samuel's Watches.** Fine Three-quarter Plate, Jewelled, Richly Decorated Dial (plain if preferred), and Highly Engraved Case. Warranted for **Five Years**, and sent with **BONUS FREE GIFT** on receipt of **25s.**



25/-

H. SAMUEL (Dept. 29),
95, 97, 99, 101, 33, 89, and 121 Market St., MANCHESTER.

Shilling packets
Kaputine "the" safe Remedy For Headache

WARNING. *Instead of using the common White Headache Powders, which generally consist entirely of a crude drug, which has been condemned as dangerous by the medical papers, insist on having a bona-fide anti-quack remedy, recommended by such eminent medical authorities as Dr. RAMAGE, L.R.C.P., Dr. THURSTIN, L.R.C.P., late Dr. BOYD-WILLIAMS (Liverpool), the Editor of the Medical Journal, "Health," etc., etc. The name of this safe remedy is KAPUTINE.*

ALL LEADING CHEMISTS SELL IT, OR CAN GET IT FOR YOU IN A FEW HOURS.

Sold by BOOT'S, TAYLOR'S, DAY'S, WHITE'S and other Stores. Most Co-operative Stores sell it.

PACKETS, 1/-. SAMPLES ONE PENNY,

or KAPUTINE LIMITED, HUDDERSFIELD,
will send it FREE for 12 stamps.

WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
The Best Soap for all Purposes.
It Still Holds the Lead. Quality Perfect.

NUBOLIC SOAP
A Pure and Perfect Disinfectant
Harmless to the Skin.

BUY THEM, PROVE THEM, and SECURE A PRIZE.

BIG PRIZE SCHEME

For DECEMBER, 1901.

33,963 Prizes value **£16,000**

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize, £50	£50	0
1	Cash Prize, £45	45	0
1	Cash Prize, £40	40	0
5	Pianos, £40 each	200	0
5	Cash Prizes, £25 each	125	0
10	Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each	178	10
10	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each	178	10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each	100	0
40	Jon s's Sewing Machines, £8 each	320	0
40	Cash Prizes, £5 each	200	0
100	Dinner Services, £2 10s. per set	250	0
100	Rolled Gold Watches, £2 10s. each	250	0
100	Cash Prizes, £2 each	200	0
400	Travelling Trunks, £2 each	800	0
400	Folding Bed Chairs, £1 10s. each	600	0
400	½-doz Best Electro-plated Forks, large, £1 5s. per ½ doz.	500	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, small, £1 5s. per ½-doz.	500	0
400	Cash Prizes, £1 each	400	0
400	Ladies' Hatboxes, £1 each	400	0
800	pairs Blankets, £1 per pair	800	0
300	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1 each	300	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- each	£750	0
1000	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. each	750	0
800	best Electro-plated Teapots, 15s. each	600	0
800	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	600	0
1000	pairs Bed Sheets 12 6 pair	625	0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 12 6 each	625	0
400	½-doz. Table Knives, 11s. per ½-doz.	220	0
1000	Cash Prizes, 10s. each	500	0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 10s. each	500	0
400	½-doz. Dessert Knives, 9/6 per ½-doz.	190	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7/6 each	375	0
2000	Ladies' Dress Lengths, 7/6 each	750	0
2000	Cash Prizes, 5s each	500	0
5000	Ladies' Leather Handbags, 4s. each	1000	0
1640	Handsome Pictures "Charge of the Light Brigade," 4s. each	328	0
5000	½-doz. Ladies' Fine Linen Cambric H'dkerchiefs, 2/6 ½-doz.	625	0
5000	Handsome Work-boxes, 2/6 each	625	0
33,963		**£16,000**	**0**

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest number of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds**, not later than December 31st, 1901. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly **"Prize Competition."** A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. All prizes will be despatched about February 7th, 1902. The decision of **Joseph Watson & Sons Ltd.** to be final.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
is the Housewife's Friend. Saves her health, her strength, her wealth. Washes her clothes with ease, and leaves them sweet and pure, and will not injure the most delicate fabric. **Best Soap for all Purposes.** *Largest sale of 1lb. Tablets in the World.*

NUBOLIC SOAP
THE BEST & MOST RELIABLE DISINFECTANT.
For use in Kitchen, Laundry, Bathroom, and Nursery. Wards off illness. Saves Doctors' Bills.

Sold by all Grocers, Oilmen, &c., throughout the United Kingdom.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.
EPPS'S
GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.
COCOA
BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.
BIRKBECK BANK,
Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** repayable on demand. **2½%**

The Birkbeck Almanack, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES.

No. 645.] For the Week Ending May 11th, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

A Keeper of Secrets

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Being Days in the Professional Life of the late Mr. Hugo Pontifex, the Famous West-end Solicitor.

To those who had only met him casually in Society, the late Mr. Pontifex was a good-tempered mystery. Bluff, handsome, and, in spite of his middle-age, a little of a dandy, he seemed the last man in the world to deserve his reputation, which was that of the keenest, most audacious, and unerring of family lawyers. Fair-haired, and powerful as an athlete, his striking appearance was increased by his eyes, one of which was grey and one blue.

In reality, however, Hugo Pontifex had a wide and almost exclusively aristocratic practice. He seldom briefed a barrister, seldom set foot in a court of justice, but single handed he hunted down, captured, and safely buried mystery after mystery of terrible import to Mayfair and Belgravia.

An expert in st angling scandal, he lived a life of enthralling interest, and died a rich man. When his executors went through his papers they found nothing to satisfy their curiosity, though plenty to excite it. Hugo Pontifex knew the value of fire—and the dangers of ink. But from time to time he related to the writer, who enjoyed a certain measure of his confidence, the incidents which form the basis of the following stories. In speaking of these strange fragments of drama, Mr. Pontifex himself employed fictitious names, the present author being left to guess vainly at the identity of the genuine actors.

THE MEANING OF THE MIDGET MIRROR.

WHEN Sir Rupert Dane, baronet, of Warwickshire and London—having been duly announced by the deaf clerk—stalked into the presence of Mr. Pontifex, the solicitor perceived that he had before him a good-looking, well-dressed, and dejected young Briton.

The new comer responded, with a curt nod and a heavy sigh, to Mr. Pontifex's formal salutation. Then, feeling in one of his vest-pockets, he got out a screw of tissue-paper, untwisted it, and produced a tiny article, flat and glittering. He laid it in a brown palm and extended it towards the lawyer.

Hugo Pontifex bent to examine the trifle. "A fragment of some mirror, is it not?" he asked, smiling, in spite of himself, at the dismal importance of his client's bearing.

"No fragment," said Rupert Dane, deliberately; "but a perfect whole. And a mirror of excellent quality you will find it."

"What," inquired the solicitor, "may be its precise significance?"

For reply the baronet drew forth a meerschaum cigar-holder, ornamented by a coiled dragon of the same material. Into the opening of this he thrust the diminutive mirror, adjusting it carefully at an angle.

"The holder is mine," said Rupert Dane; "a score of my acquaintances would swear to it. Last night I extracted from it that wicked little contrivance, which the father of my betrothed wife had seen and interpreted. Together, Mr. Pontifex, the cigar-holder and the mirror form a cardsharper's assistant of the most perfect kind."

Hugo Pontifex picked up the meerschaum mouthpiece and studied it.

"The operator," explained the youthful baronet, dejectedly, "allows the combination to lie on the table at his elbow and when he deals, passes the cards over it in such a manner that their downward faces are reflected in the screened glass. Thus he is kept informed of the hands of all the other players."

The solicitor nodded; he was turning the carved meerschaum to and from the light, investigating the powers of the hidden mirror.

"As a result of the mysterious introduction of the accursed thing into my cigar-holder," added Sir Rupert, bitterly; "I am no longer the affianced husband of the only woman I shall ever love, but an outcast from her society, doomed not to approach her again under penalty of instant exposure. Colonel Heathcote Anderson is a man of his word; if you cannot help me, Mr. Pontifex, I have seen Olive Anderson for the last time."

Mr. Pontifex sat down in his swivel-chair, still pondering the ingenious device passed to him by Rupert Dane.

"What caused Colonel Anderson," he said, "to investigate your cigar-holder so minutely?"

"Someone had suggested to him that I had been cheating," answered the baronet; "who his informant was he would not reveal. He said that he was bound by a promise. I have been staying with a party on Anderson's yacht, the *Sylph*, at Cowes. We played cards and, to be frank, for highish stakes. I admit I

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

was lucky, yet so were others. But in any event, Anderson considered that my possession of the affair you are analyzing proved my guilt."

"Colonel Anderson evidently had been told what to seek for," observed Hugo Pontifex, opening a shallow drawer in his writing-table, and picking up from it a pair of tweezers.

"Undoubtedly," rejoined Sir Rupert, "nor did he disguise the fact. His ostensible excuse for borrowing my cigar-holder—he had visited me privately in my cabin for the purpose—was that he had a wager to decide as to the form of the dragon upon it. Once the holder was in his possession, he showed me the contents, denounced me as a professional swindler, and warned me to cross no more his or his daughter's path."

The gallant officer's anger faded as he read it.

The baronet leant forward to follow the lawyer's proceeding. Mr. Pontifex, seizing the mirror with the delicate pliers, had pulled it out. A gold locket hung at Hugo Pontifex's watch chain; he unclasped it, pushed a spring, and a powerful magnifying lens sprang to sight. The solicitor scrutinized by its aid the interior of the meerschaum tube.

"Do you," he queried, abstractedly, "do you suspect any particular person of playing you this trick?"

Rupert Dane pondered.

"I cannot honestly say that I do," he owned, "Anderson is the best fellow alive and the remainder of the men aboard were decent enough. They were merely acquaintances and could have no possible grudge against me."

Mr. Pontifex restored his lens to its customary position, tossed the tweezers on to the table and deposited, beside the slender tool, the meerschaum tube and the mirror—which might have been hidden beneath a threepenny bit, so small was it.

"Any ladies on the *Sylph*?" he demanded.

The baronet coloured.

"Miss Anderson," he said, "and Mrs. Joyce, a pretty widow, Anderson's sister-in-law. She was practically both hostess and chaperon—Anderson's wife died several years ago."

Hugo Pontifex twisted his sapphire ring and bent his bushy brows.

"Why conceal from me, Sir Rupert," he observed, with startling directness, "that you are guilty?"

Rupert Dane stared at the lawyer, aghast; Mr. Pontifex's grim features lost their severity.

"My apologies," said the solicitor laughing, "but I had to make sure—your expression was perfectly satisfactory; surprise is the most difficult emotion in the world to counterfeit."

The baronet breathed freely.

"For a second," he admitted, "I feared you were in earnest; the evidence, I feel, is scarcely less than damning."

"Not at all," objected Hugo Pontifex; "the evidence—providing that you have suppressed nothing—is below contempt. Were you in straits for money, or a habitual gambler for large sums, it would not be so trivial as it appears. But, having been engaged to Miss Anderson, I calculate that her father would have required proofs of your solvency, except, indeed, the engagement were secret."

"It had not, so far, been made public," qualified Rupert Dane, "but Colonel Anderson was aware of it, and approved."

Mr. Pontifex swung himself meditatively in his poised swivel-chair; the lines of profound thought stamped themselves upon his keen visage.

"Answer me scrupulously this question, Sir Rupert," he said. Had there been the least friction between yourself and any person on board the *Sylph*, no matter at what period of your acquaintance with them or what the reason for the misunderstanding."

The baronet hesitated. "If I must reply categorically," he faltered; "I will, though I cannot see that my quarrel with Mrs. Joyce has the slightest bearing on the subject."

"Pardon my stipulating, Sir Rupert," commented Mr. Pontifex; "that I am judge on the point to which you refer."

Rupert Dane fidgeted uneasily; "I—I had flirted with

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Joyce," he said; "before I fell in love with Olive, and I—I fear she had grown to care for me. Not till she met me on the *Sylph* last week did she learn that I was engaged and to Olive Anderson. She treated me to a scene the next day, and in that sense I grant I quarrelled with her. But you will see that my breach with her does not affect my present beastly mess."

Mr. Pontifex touched the bell at his elbow.

"Send to the Albany for my bag," he ordered the clerk. "Sir Rupert," he supplemented, "you must invite me to Cowes and the *Sylph*. Assure Colonel Anderson that you are innocent, and I have travelled to the Isle of Wight to prove you so. He should know me by reputation, but I will provide myself with a note of introduction that will conciliate him. That is, if he be the Heathcote Anderson that fought so gallantly as a lieutenant at Tel-el-Kebir."

"He is," assented Sir Rupert, "and as sturdy a hero as ever. I would sacrifice ten years of my existence to win back his respect."

The solicitor glanced at his hunter.

"Eleven o'clock," he said; "I will stroll round to the Army and Navy and ask Lord Logan to recommend me to the Colonel's affections—they were brothers-in-arms in Africa. Meet me at Victoria at 1.40, we will catch the 1.45. It reaches Cowes at 5.35."

Rupert Dane grasped the lawyer's firm fingers.

"You are a prince of solicitors, Mr. Pontifex," he cried; "do with me as you will."

Hugo Pontifex laughed—he was never happier than when removing some obstacle that kept a couple of youthful souls apart. Donning his immaculate "silk," he bade his client *au revoir* and walked down St. James' Street and Pall Mall to the famous service club. A stalwart, grey-haired soldier—the newest and cleverest addition to the General Staff—greeted him warmly and scribbled him the required missive.

Mr. Pontifex bore it off in triumph, lunched, collected a kit bag from his office, not forgetting the mirror and the meerschaum holder, changed his "frock" for a morning coat, and drove off to Victoria.

A glorious afternoon was yellowing to its close when Sir Rupert Dane and he were crossing the Solent in a shore-boat towards the trim white hull of Colonel Anderson's luxurious steam yacht, the *Sylph*.

As they mounted the brass-railed accommodation ladder, the lawyer noticed, strolling upon the snowy deck of the *Sylph*, a plump and extremely piquant brunette, in a smart yachting costume of blue serge and white piqué.

By her dawdled a tall and rather lean cavalier, whose black hair, cut in a French mode, and tightly-waxed moustache, bespoke the foreigner as plainly as his garb and cold grey eye indicated the Englishman.

"That is Mrs. Joyce," whispered Rupert Dane, "her companion is Lucian Reece, a cosmopolitan, Anglo-Saxon and a hard nut to crack."

Hugo Pontifex scrutinized them acutely; the glances of the couple had fallen upon the young baronet with a species of astonishment that brought a singular shrewdness into the face of each.

He lingered to survey them a moment and then suffered Sir Rupert to lead him to Colonel Anderson's state room.

On the way thither they encountered a lovely girl, who, clad in a fluttering confection of chiffon, was reclining on a wicker-lounge.

"I fear, Mrs. Joyce, she is as heartless as she is handsome."

She rose hastily.

"Rupert!" she exclaimed, and checked herself on realizing that the baronet was not alone.

Mr. Pontifex moved a few paces off—soon Rupert Dane joined him, biting a nervous lip and struggling to assume an indifferent demeanour.

Hugo Pontifex sympathetically ignored his agitation.

The baronet and the lawyer entered the Colonel's cramped cabin. Its occupant turned from an escritoire to stare at the intruders.

Mr. Pontifex stepped in front of Sir Rupert, unfolded his errand with a provoking calmness, and ended by presenting Lord Logan's note to the indignant Colonel. That gallant officer's anger faded as he read it.

"Sir," he said stiffly; "I cannot but welcome anyone

Digitized by Google

of whom my friend Logan speaks in such terms. Pray allow me to offer you the hospitalities of the *Sylph*. As for your—your client, I will say nothing of him until you can make your promised revelations. Since he may be necessary to your project, whatever that is, he will, of course stay on board. I insist, though, on his not communicating with my daughter. I have not believed it advisable to inform her of—of his real character."

"I accept that proviso, for Sir Rupert," intimated the solicitor, quickly; "when I am able to request a further confidential interview with you, Colonel Anderson, it will be to persuade you of his entire innocence." And, taking the baronet by the arm, he drew him out upon the deck of the *Sylph*.

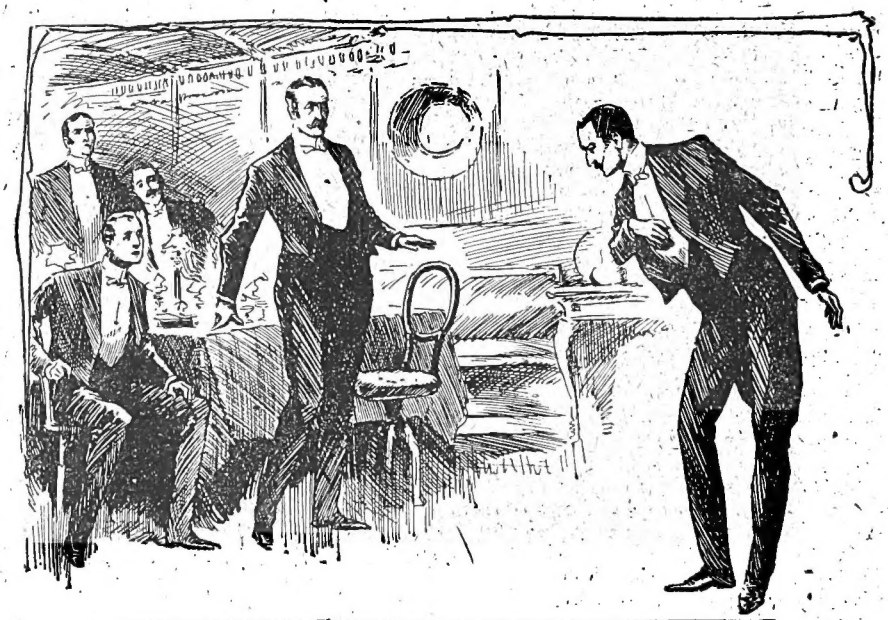
"Make me acquainted with the lady by the binnacle," he said to his client.

"Mrs. Joyce?" inquired Rupert Dane, flushing.

The lawyer nodded, smilingly, and Sir Rupert walked over to where the widow was engrossed with her dark-haired escort.

"Excuse me, Mr. Reece," he observed, raising his hat, "but I want, if she will permit me, to introduce a friend to Mrs. Joyce."

Lucian Reece bowed and left them—Hugo Pontifex had followed upon the baronet's heels. In a surprisingly brief space of time he was chatting familiarly with the coquettish brunette; at a covert sign from the lawyer, Rupert Dane also abandoned the neighbourhood of the binnacle, and Mr. Pontifex had the plump little widow to himself. Not far away, the girl in the white chiffon was gazing disconsolately over the yacht's counter from her cushioned lounge.



"Colonel Anderson, my acknowledgements for a delightful holiday."

"That beautiful creature is Miss Anderson, is she not?" asked Hugo Pontifex, suddenly. Mrs. Joyce answered in the affirmative, and Mr. Pontifex caught the imperceptible curl of her lip.

"I fancied so," said the solicitor, "from her proud, statuesque style, I fear, Mrs. Joyce, she is as heartless as she is handsome. But perhaps I am biassed; she has treated poor Dane very badly."

The widow looked at him; to Mr. Pontifex's piercing vision there was a glimmer of feeling in her bold, hazel orbs.

"I don't know why I should mention the business to you," he continued, with a skilful affectation of simplicity, "but from something Dane said to me I imagined that you had once been a friend of his—I am sure, a loyal one."

A sort of suppressed amusement seemed to twitch at Mrs. Joyce's red and crafty mouth.

"An absurd imputation on Dane's honour," pursued the lawyer, "a rumour that any true woman would have dismissed with scorn, was sufficient to demonstrate the extent of Miss Anderson's affection. Dane was so indignant at her being able to credit such an allegation that he consented willingly to break off the proposed marriage. We are here now—I am a legal chum of Dane's—to cancel formally a trust-deed that had been drawn up in anticipation of it. Dane is going to South Africa."

Mrs. Joyce started, and her cheeks dyed themselves crimson. Hugo Pontifex contemplated her slyly.

"He does not regret Miss Anderson," said the solicitor; "her callousness and credulity have effectively cured him of his passion for her, but socially he is ruined by the rumour I have described. Especially as a mysterious chance apparently lends it proof."

The widow's foot tapped the deck irresolutely. "Cannot he be induced to live down the report?" she queried.

"Impossible," asserted Hugo Pontifex; "unless Colonel Anderson should be led to apologize for having entertained it—Dane is the last to seek a vindication by the Courts. He is the subject of a despicable trick (which I happen to comprehend) but its author has successfully hidden his identity. No, there is nothing save Africa for Rupert Dane—Africa and perpetual exile."

Mrs. Joyce was biting her handkerchief and her bosom heaved. "Mr. Pontifex," she murmured; "there is a person on board who—who has a grudge against Sir Rupert; he—he might—"

"You can trust me," said the lawyer, softly; "you shall not be compromised in any degree, Dane only shall be told of your attempt to serve him. The—the name of Dane's probable enemy is—"

"Is Lucian Reece!" faltered Mrs. Joyce; "but, oh, Mr. Pontifex, not a word of my hint." A metallic sound broke in on the last of her sentence.

"Madam, I am an abyss," said Hugo Pontifex; "and that, I conclude, is the dressing gong. A thousand thanks; we shall meet at dinner."

Digitized by Google

He strode forward, found the steward, and was piloted to his cabin. Twenty minutes later he took his place in the luxurious dining saloon of the *Sylph*. The balance of the yacht party had returned from the shore, and brown skins and hearty laughter testified to the high spirits of the Colonel's bachelor guests.

Olive Anderson was seated opposite to Mr. Pontifex, by her the lean form and hawk-like profile of Lucian Reece. The solicitor felt profoundly grateful that Rupert Dane sat in the same line; the lovers could not exchange any more of those pathetic glances that had passed between them on deck. Had they done so it might have forced Mrs. Joyce to doubt the baronet's "cure."

Lucian Reece absorbed a great deal of the solicitor's attention. He was a spruce, hard-favoured, self-possessed citizen of the world, somewhat of the "bad egg" about him, yet, not an ill-tempered or a malignant type. Mr. Pontifex carried on a closely argued train of meditation as he ate his meal and gossipped with the men in his vicinity.

When the two ladies had withdrawn and the male diners had settled themselves to enjoy the pleasures of the weed, Hugo Pontifex noticed—with a throb of his stern pulses—that Lucian Reece was using a fat cigar-holder, of clouded amber, and silver mounted. The solicitor's muscles ached to stretch athwart the table and snatch it from its owner's hand. But he controlled himself, impatiently.

At length Lucian Reece laid the cigar-holder beside his plate and began to cut a fresh Havanna. In a twinkling Mr. Pontifex had reached over and snapped up the short tube. Its proprietor made a motion as if to retain it, but arrested himself with a covert sneer.

Hugo Pontifex detached the locket from his watch-chain, pushed out the lens, and elevating it calmly, examined the interior of the amber funnel.

"Eureka!" cried the solicitor, rising; "Colonel Anderson, I promised not to ask you for another private interview until I was ready to convince you of a particular fact. May I dispense with that privacy and make my statement in the presence of your guests?"

The diners were staring bewilderedly at Mr. Pontifex; Lucian Reece had thrust back his chair out of the startled circle. The lawyer took the permission of his host for granted.

"Several days since, gentlemen," commenced the lawyer; "Colonel Anderson was approached by a person, whose individuality he refused to disclose, with the suggestion that Sir Rupert Dane had been cheating at cards during games played recently on board this yacht. The proof was to be the discovery of a minute mirror, arranged in the orifice of Sir Rupert's cigar-holder, so as to betray to him, when dealing, the nature of the cards dealt. That mirror was found, and, as a consequence, Sir Rupert ceased to be a guest on the *Sylph*, and his engagement with Miss Anderson was dissolved."

A sigh of interest ran through the listeners.

"Just now," added Mr. Pontifex, "I inspected, by a microscopic lens, the opening of a cigar-holder belonging to Mr. Lucian Reece. I discerned in it two grooves, neatly gouged and adapted to receive the mirror which I produce, and which was found in Sir Rupert's holder when examined by Colonel Anderson."

He got out the midget reflector and slipped it into the amber mouthpiece.

"I expected that," he said; "it's too small, having been ground down by an amateur, as the edges, slightly splintered under the operation, betray. Were it a fraction larger it would fit the channels prepared for it. Those in Sir Rupert's smaller holder are clumsy and ragged, and bear traces of their hasty manufacture. Do you follow me, Colonel Anderson?"

"You astound us, Mr. Pontifex," gasped his host; "Mr. Reece, have you any explanation? I feel compelled, in the circumstances, to withdraw my pledge of secrecy, and to admit that it was you who accused Sir Rupert of foul play."

Lucian Reece stood up, laughing.

"None whatever," he said. "Mr. Pontifex is a miracle and I am, undoubtedly, the sinner. The mirror was removed from my own holder—in combination with which it has won me a moderate amount per annum—and fitted to Sir Rupert's. To be candid, I bore him no malice myself—but let us not go into the embarrassing problem of motive. Colonel Anderson, my acknowledgments for a delightful holiday; Mr. Pontifex, my humble congratulations. Gentlemen all, farewell—you would not wish me to say *au revoir*."

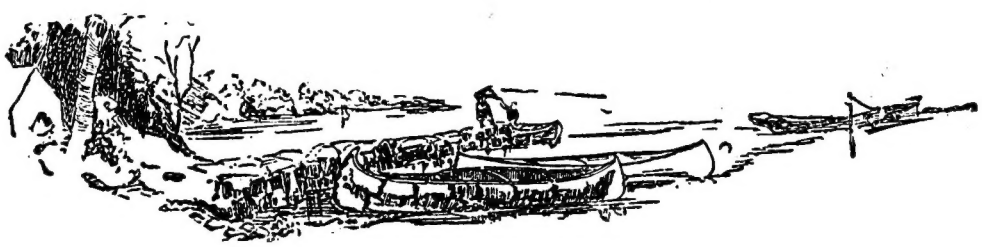
And, still laughing, he marched to the door of the saloon and disappeared. An hour subsequently, the splash of oars in the waters of the Cowes roadstead announced his departure from the *Sylph*.

* * * * *

On the ensuing day, Mr. Pontifex perused this characteristic epistle from the man he had so brilliantly unmasked.

> Sir,—I take you to be a person who can tolerate a straightforward rogue. I am a rogue, this will convince you that I can be straightforward. I desired nothing worse than to cheat Dane out of a few sovereigns at nap or écarté. My attempt to ruin him was dictated by Mrs. Joyce, whom I met in India, and who knows more of my past than I should care for her to proclaim. She ordered me to dish Sir Rupert with the Colonel, and I obeyed. Among those, however, who rejoice at your surprising checkmate is yours sincerely,
>
> LUCIAN REECE.

It is surely not necessary to observe that Sir Rupert Dane received his apology from Colonel Heathcote Anderson, and that lace and orange-blossoms became Lady Dane excellently.



Digitized by Google

SLAIN BY A FAN.

THE feather fan was not exactly what we should call a fan in these days. It was more like a fire-screen, perhaps! for it was large and light, and made by a double row of short white ostrich feathers being stuck round half-a-circle of wood japanned and gilded, about three inches in diameter, and having a rather long handle.

Through a hole bored in the end of this handle, a cord of gold threads and black silk passed; and this cord was fastened together by a wonderfully beautiful tassle, into which seed pearls were looped, and little stars of gold.

To prevent the feathers getting out of shape and disengaged at their ends, very thin wire, covered with white silk, was passed between them two inches perhaps from the outer circle, and to this wire the feathers were fastened, back to back, by a little device of seed pearls on one side and a gold star on the other—such was a fan.

And such a fan Isabella of Spain, the wife of the Archduke Albert, held in her hand when she visited Rubens in his studio at Antwerp, if we may trust—and we certainly may—to history written with a painter's colours, and given to the world by the engraver's tool; such a fan belonged to women who wore ruffs like Queen Elizabeth, with modifications; and long stiff-stomachered gowns, and velvet cloaks with stiff edgings.

They, too, had puffs of fair satin and lace round their delicate wrists, and hair turned off their foreheads and kept safe in a velvet cap, which gave a happy excuse for banding their heads with gold, and such other precious things as they had power to command.

And after these things passed away, and Vandyke had told the world how point lace could show off face and neck in man and woman by lying flat, and turning over on the dress of cloth or velvet, still the feather fan was used, such as I described to you, and such as I am going to write about. It was a fan to attract anyone's attention, even the attention of a non-fan-flirting animal, even of a man like myself. I exclaimed when I saw it:

"What a fan!"

"Yes," said a sweetly grave and rather more than middle-aged lady, speaking without looking up from a manuscript which she was unrolling, all lines, and names, and figures; "yes"—giving a glance from her soft brown eyes over her spectacles—"it is the fan you see in the picture."

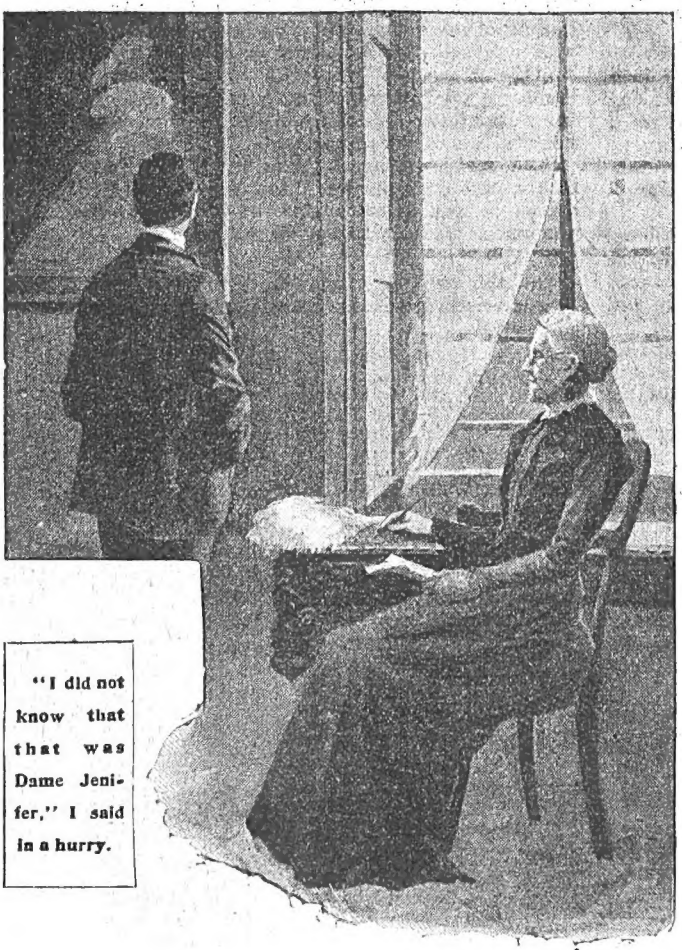
"What picture?"

"Don't you know? The picture over the couch—Dame Jenifer. She was as odd as her namesake."

Her namesake, as all the world ought to know, was no other than Guinever, the beautiful and maligned wife of King Arthur. It is a west-country name; living there, and nowhere else, I believe, like Digory for D'Egaré, that Knight of the Round Table. So fare the mighty, even in their names.

Though the lady in the spectacles was my own mother, and though I had every cause and inclination to be loving and reverential, I certainly had a great wish to do battle for the injured memory of the great hero's queen; but there lay the fan—that and the long roll of manuscript the only things on the table—there lay the fan, and it was the original of the fan in the picture, the fan that Dame Jenifer held.

It became suddenly an object of immense interest to me. We say sometimes when we take up any ancient piece of finery, preserved from past times, that we wonder who wore—who used—who bought and who treasured it? But in the case of this fan, looking so fair and light—this beautiful bauble all gold and pearls—I knew who had used it, and turning my eyes to the picture, I saw her there.



"I did not know that that was Dame Jenifer," I said in a hurry.

Digitized by Google

"Dame Jenifer"—always when I say those words they seem to describe to my ear a very stiff sort of stuck-up personage, bristling with self-importance, tenacious of power, persecuting in temper, and of evil prophecy as to what the lives of the young around her would turn out. But when I then looked at Dame Jenifer, the eye corrected the ear. A girl of seventeen, perhaps, sat on a sofa in a costume resembling that of "Rubens' wife." The *chapeau de paille*, with its long drooping feather, threw a shadow half-way down her face, for her head was bent, till her dimpled chin rested on the jewel that fastened her green velvet dress round her throat; she held the fan in her hand in such a manner that she looked as if she beckoned you to her in a shy, half-secret way; and the eyes that looked out from under the long eyelashes were full of girlish roguery, and an inextinguishable mirth.

"I did not know that *that* was Dame Jenifer," I said in a hurry. "I thought the stiff old lady in the white muslin apron and open black silk dress was Jenifer—the picture on the staircase I mean."

"My dear boy, you will never learn their names. And yet I knew names and histories before I was your age."

"But then you had always lived here, and I am only just come."

So I persuaded my mother, who was a born antiquary, to put away the long manuscript and sit round towards the fire—it was raining piteously—and tell me all she knew of Dame Jenifer. While she is making the necessary introductory remarks, I must have some further little explanation with the reader about myself.

I was the eldest of three children, and I was twenty-five years of age. Urgent family affairs, and health rather the worse for wear under the new conditions of an Indian atmosphere, had brought me home, after a seven years' absence from England. My father was dead, and my mother had very unexpectedly become the possessor of an old property of considerable value. Her only brother, many years younger than herself, had left it to her unconditionally and unencumbered. She had two other sons, and I was to arrange with her to divide my father's property between them, and, taking her maiden name of Heniker, become heir to the old estate myself.

Up to this time we had always lived in London. I had never seen Heniker till now, though I had heard of it often enough, my mother having loved her old home with a remarkably strong affection; and now, as I have already explained, I was suddenly interested in my mother's ancestress, Dame Jenifer, the owner of the feather fan.

"Her name was Jenifer Obin, my dear boy," my mother began, taking off her spectacles and producing her knitting from a long little Indian box which I had brought back to her. "Jenifer Obin's father was a Royalist, as all the best gentry of good old Cornwall were, and he died at the battle of Broad Oak Down. My ancestor, Peter Heniker, was there. He was of this county, as you know, and lived here. But he and Jenifer's father had been dear friends, and they had promised each other that if either died in the wars of that day the other should take the child that should be left fatherless, and bringing the orphan up with their own, arrange a marriage between the two. So, by some means or other, when Sir Peter Heniker heard of Captain Obin's death he sent for Jenifer.

He died at the battle of Broad Oak Down.

"The child was ten years old. When she came she said she had pledged her word to take care of a girl called Kate Cradock, if their fathers died in battle. The double deaths had occurred, and Jenifer clamoured for Kate. Sir Peter was not the man to do any good deed in an imperfect manner, so Kate, too, was brought to this house as Jenifer's friend and companion.

"Sir Peter was a man of about forty years of age, a widower with a son of fourteen. To this son he stood pledged to give Jenifer in marriage, and the children knowing of the arrangement made no objection.

"Young Heniker, however, when Jenifer was nearly fifteen, was killed by an accident, and Jenifer and Sir Peter lamented together, and consoled with each other. The next male heir to this place—it was not entailed—was Sir Peter's nephew, the son of a younger brother who had married very early in life, and was settled in

Digitized by Google

This was all that I got for my ten mile ride.

trade in a neighbouring seaport. This boy was Jaspar Heniker, and Sir Peter said that he was now to inherit the place and to marry the young lady.

"When Jenifer was sixteen, Kate Cradock being a year older, the discovery was made by Miss Obin that Jaspar and Kate Cradock had been making love before young Peter Heniker's death.

"She was furiously angry. Not angry with Jaspar for loving Kate, that she confessed in many of her letters to Kate herself which have been preserved, was natural enough, for they had received an equal amount of education, and Kate was very fair, and very good. But what Jenifer hated so heartily was the willingness of Jaspar to give up Kate, and marry another without loving her, just to secure to himself the place of his uncle's heir."

"Quite right," I exclaimed. "And I beg Jenifer's pardon with having confused her with the stiff old lady on the stairs."

"Take care," said my mother smiling.

I looked towards the picture. The fire played on the face and made it look absolutely alive and then the flame died out and left the figure indistinct; but I had suddenly received the impression that one day I should see Dame Jenifer and speak to her. The notion was absurd and utterly unreasonable, but nevertheless it had given me the very oddest thrill I had ever suffered.

"Why am I to 'take care?'" I asked; and I fancied my voice had changed a little.

But my mother only poked the fire once more into a blaze, and said:

"Dame Jenifer's has been the strange story of the family. I only meant to say, take care how you praise her before you hear the end."

So saying she went on with Dame Jenifer's story.

"Terribly angry she was with Jaspar, and all the more because the love between her and Kate Cradock was as true as ever; and Kate was suffering bravely and secretly, and trying to make the sacrifice so generously as not to betray the whole truth.

But the whole truth was known to Jenifer, somehow, and yet she allowed the day for her marriage to be fixed, and let Sir Peter make all the wedding preparations. They were to be married here, in the hall, which was then a sort of banqueting hall; and they stood, so the story says, on the dais—that raised floor just under the musician's gallery.

"But the night before she had had a great explanation with Kate Cradock—that night she had seen his last letter to the deserted girl, in which his love was declared in the strongest terms, and his marriage with her elf was spoken of as the hard necessity that grew out of Sir Peter's promise to his friend, her father, and he wrote that the estate would go to Jenifer's husband, who ever it might be.

"And so, somehow, a stange thing was arranged. The bridal party stood in their places about ten at night. The bride veiled—the bridesmaids veiled—they were three in number, and Jenifer had arranged their toilettes. But when Jaspar uncovered his wife's face to give her the kiss that was usual in those days, he found he had married Kate Cradock; and Jenifer, flinging back her own veil, congratulated him with all a girl's revengeful satisfaction and force.

"But it was Sir Peter who was most astonished.

"'Jenifer,' he exclaimed, 'you have done yourself a cruel wrong, perhaps. I promised your dead father that you should be mistress of Heniker. I have lost my son,

Digitized by Google

and you have cast my nephew from you; Madam, there remains only myself!"

"And so, taking the girl's hand, and drawing a ring from his own finger, he held her, speechless, to the spot the married people had left, and with a stern voice, commanded the clergyman to begin again.

"After a pause of a moment, to allow the girl to speak if she would, the service was once more said.

"When Sir Peter had to speak, his voice was so solemn and so respectful—so full of manly loving and of gentle promise, that all of the many listeners were struck by the eloquence of its tones. They said that Jenifer looked up at him wonderingly, as he bowed his tall form towards her, and uttered the 'I will'; that their eyes met once, and that in that single glance he had conquered, and she was won. Her voice answered him with a pathos and a meaning it had never had before—and she was mistress of Heniker, and his word was redeemed."

"Mother," I exclaimed, "I like our ancestress better than ever. I hope they were happy."

"Oh, yes," said my mother, carelessly: "they were very happy, and had a fine son who was one of my grandfathers. But there is rather an ugly story of Jaspar's anger when this son was born, and some ill-tempered wishes, which were to vex all Henikers till something impossible happened—I can't tell what."

"And this is her fan?"

I again took up the feather fan.

"Yes; Sir Peter was proud of his girl-wife, and had her picture taken; and she is looking full of healthful malice at the double success of her daring trick—is not she?"

"She is very handsome; and I am sure I must have seen someone so like her."

My mother's face was a wonder to look at when I said this. Her "Where?" had a strange anxiety in it; and when I said, "In my dreams, I suppose," she laughed, half-sadly, and turned away.

I had not been more than a week with my mother at Heniker, and I had not been in England more than a fortnight. We had lived always in London, in a good house in a pleasant situation. To this house my father had taken my dear mother when she first left Heniker to be his bride, and there all her children had been born.

To be the possessor of Heniker had never crossed my imagination. I had never thought of my uncle as a man likely to die, or even to live unmarried; and so, when, on reaching London, I found my mother's letter desiring me to join her in her own old home, I obeyed, with an odd feeling of change upon me, to which was not quite pleasant to feel that I had to grow accustomed. It was not the welcome I had expected.

I was young enough to expect and to picture; to desire, and even to crave after the old home, and the sweet, soft-voiced, tender-eyed mother, who had always made a darling of her first-born. I would rather have met her in the home I knew. And Heniker I felt to be something of an intrusion into my life, though it made her rich, and endowed me with expectations. It took all the first week to reconcile me to the obliteration of my picture, and to make me look my fortune in the face in a friendly manner. But about the seventh day I shook hands with Fate, and acknowledged her bounties.

Lawyers and friends agreed that we might go back to London. So we packed up sundry small treasures which were to travel with us, and sat down to spend almost our last evening in the room where the picture hung of the lady with the feather fan. As was natural, we talked again of Dame Jenifer's story; but I saw my

"Don't you dance? Come here, I want to introduce you."

mother shrunk a little from the subject. And again by the glinting firelight, as we sat gossiping, I caught the strange life-like smile of the laughing face, till I grew friendly with its beauty, and was almost cheated into thinking that the real fan and not its picture was beckoning to me from a living hand. I think this evening will always remain in my memory with a strange sensation of mystery about it. But in the morning came a letter, which made my mother determine to prolong her stay at Heniker; and I was too happy in our close reunion after a seven years' separation to wish to leave her.

* * * * *

I felt at first sorry to stay longer at Heniker. I will honestly confess that there was something distinctly uncomfortable in the picture of the lady and her feather fan.

Digitized by Google

There, on a table in the corner of the room, lay the fan that Dame Jenifer had really held, but the whole room seemed to be inhabited by the picture of it and the fair holder.

I felt her smile when I could not see it and I am candid enough to declare that I looked round again and again when seated with my back to this haunting picture, as if to make sure that the fan was still in the place where the painter had placed it.

Dame Jenifer's eyes were always laughing at me,

She spoke good-humouredly, like a child answering.

always following me with that quizzing expression which few men are heroic enough not to mind, and, perhaps, are no greater for such heroism even if they may have attained to it.

Our visit to Heniker had begun with gloom and the friendly consolations of great fires; but now, suddenly, spring had cast aside her winter garb; the trees were bursting into leaf so quickly that from day to day we recognised a glorious change.

My wanderings with my mother were prolonged till late in the soft evenings, and it was during one of those sweet, sauntering hours, that I again talked to her of Dame Jenifer's story.

"What became of Jaspar Heniker and his wife, Kate Cradock?"

"One day you must look over the Heniker letters. They will please you, for Kate and her friend wrote pleasantly to each other. Kate had children, and one of her sons married Jenifer's only daughter. But there was no issue from that marriage. Jenifer's son was to have married one of Jaspar's girls; but he had a spirit like his mother's, I suppose, and he would not fulfil what the mothers wished for. He took his wife from a noble family, and the place has come down to us in an unbroken line."

"I should like to visit Jaspar's home."

"It was somewhere near Whitesands. I have ridden there as a girl."

"And did Henikers live there then?"

"No. It was a long, low, rambling farm-house. Mr. Heniker has let it many years. He was the last, and was in India then. Since that he married a young widow, with a daughter, I think; but he never had any children of his own, so 'Dick Heniker,' as my father used to call him, was the last of Jaspar's descendants. The house was called Whiteacres Farm. Dick was a little older than me."

"I shall ride over there to-morrow," I said.

And when the morning rose with all the promise of a summer's day, I proceeded to keep my word, ordered Jessie, my favourite, out of the Heniker stables, and after breakfast mounted, and rode away.

I reached Whiteacres at last—a farm standing amidst many inclosures, and having a few fine evergreens to shelter it. I found only one woman and a girl within. She was the farmer's wife.

Three dogs rushed out at Jesaie and me, but Mrs. Brooks pacified them and then asked me what I wanted.

I told her who I was, and that I had a fancy to see Whiteacres.

"To whom does it belong?" I asked.

"It's a gentleman high in the Army, sir, who takes the rent—I can't tell his name. I know it sometimes. I think he takes it for someone who is not of age."

"A Heniker?" I asked.

"Oh, no, sir, they are all gone."

"Is there anything worth seeing in the house?"

"No sir. There was some ancient things, but they was all moved about a dozen years ago—just before we came here. There used to be more buildings out that way, but they were pulled down, and the stones used for repairs. There's old archings and window-mouldings round at the walls of the waggon-house and piggeries, sir, if you please to look at them."

This was all I got for my ten mile ride, and thinking how all things live their time and then pass away, and are forgotten, I went back to Heniker.

At last the time came for us to return to London. My mother, in her childhood's home, had been living with me through many tender memories, but she seemed to put them aside as she packed up to go away, and in London she was all brightness, life, and activity, and as proud

Google

of her sons as they were happy in their mother. The weather was radiantly bright, and our lives were as full of as much enjoyment as life ever yields, and then there came an event.

My mother's friend, Mrs. Chester, had come to London to get dresses and make arrangements for a fancy ball which she was going to give at their home in Hampshire.

Two daughters had come to London with her, and my brothers were upon me.

"Now, Henikers, which are you going to marry?"

To marry either of the Misses Chester did not appear a particularly easy thing to do; they were very grand personages, and kept me at a considerable distance, until I was discovered to have a ready pencil for drawing dressed-up figures, and a good fortune awaiting in broad acres. By degrees—knowledge having made these advances—we became acquainted, and on familiar terms, and engaged to dance certain dances at the coming ball

We all went to Shortlands; and the night after our arrival were all in the ball-room.

Regimentals had been voted sufficiently brilliant dresses for military men, so I was provided with a costume.

My brothers had chosen to be attendants on my mother, who was dressed to represent some character which demanded such appendages; and in the midst of a scene far too full of sparkle for me to write about, we stood, admiring and, to some degree it is to be hoped, admired.

Next to the ball-room, which was crowded, there was another large room, and there a few of the guests, seated among high oleanders, and trained vines, and orange trees, were waiting and resting, listening to the band, and being reflected, with their surroundings, in long narrow mirrors.

I stood in the entrance of this room, and saw in a mirror towards the end, on my right, the lady with the feather fan—Dame Jenifer, looking as much alive as when her wooing and wedding took place together and at once, in the old hall in my new west country home.

I consider it no disgrace to declare thus publicly that I gazed with a breathless feeling of surprise, and a sensation so like fear, that I stood rooted to the spot, and most uncertain as to my eyesight; for on looking with determination round the room, and again at the mirror, the substance was not to be seen, and the shadow was gone.

"Don't you dance? Come here, I want to introduce you."

"Stop, Chester. There's a woman here with a feather fan."

"Fifty, I should think. Everybody has a feather fan. It belongs to a fancy dress."

"No, no; not this fea her fan—let's find her."

"Nonsense! Won't you dance——"

"Only with the women who have feather fans—there she is again! Now—flesh and blood, I declare! Now, Chester are you mad? What are you staring about? She s handsomer than Dame Jenifer a thousand times; and I'll get to the bottom of this, if it's my grandmother's ghost in good earnest."

"Miss Clayton," said Chester, who had been dragged by me across the room, forcibly, "if you are not afraid of a lunatic—he is a great friend of mine!"

She burst int a low musical laugh, I felt sure she had seen my start of astonishment reflected in the looking-glass.

"This," said Chester, forgetting my change of name, "this is Alfred Pelham — Captain Pelham, I mean, I beg your pardon. He wishes to have the honour of——"

"Talking to Miss Clayton about her dress and her feather fan," I said, interrupting my friend. And then all three indulged in a laugh, and Chester walked away to leave us to our mysteries. Upon which Miss Clayton and I sat down, for I was far too much in earnest for dancing. "Now, Miss Clayton, what made you appear here in that dress?"

"I chose it because I liked it. I made it with my own hands, helped by my aunt, Lady Ross, and her clever maid."

She spoke good-humouredly, like a child answering questions.

"Forgive me for keeping to my question. What made you choose it."

"I have, at my uncle's house, a coloured sketch of a lady on a sofa, with this sort of fan in her hand. She is not a very laudable lady, for we used to say that she cheated us out of a good inheritance by marrying the uncle instead of the heir. And so there was an evil saying that those who inherited from her should never prosper till the two lines were united. But there are no men Henikers left in the world now, and I have dressed myself like the old picture, with no evil feelings in my heart, but a moderate complacency only, which I believe not to be criminal."

She made this little speech with the drollest affectation of candour, and the glance of her pretty eyes was just Dame Jenifer's over again.

I said:

"And were the families never united?"

"Oh, yes, Dame Jenifer's daughter married her old lover's son, and she brought the picture into the house. But that was no use. Dame Jenifer's son carried on the elder line, and the old gossips meant that the two lines should become one."

"I have stud ed the pedigree, Miss Clayton. I thought Richard Heniker, of Whiteacres, died without children. Allow me to ask—Who are you?"

"Richard Heniker died in India. But he married his cousin, my mother, a widow—Mrs. Clayton. So when my stepfather, who was also my cousin, died, I was the only Heniker left in the world, and I was given to the guardianship of Sir James Ross, because his wife was my father's sister."

"And is Whiteacres yours?"

"Yes."

She rose up, and I took her across the room to Lady Ross. She introduced me as Captain Pelham, and I said, under the protection of Lady Ross' presence:

"I was called Pelham; but I had to take the name of Heniker last week."

And then Lady Ross, who had learnt all about it, was so glad to know me. and while Mary Clayton coloured crimson, I felt that the aunt had marked me down as "eligible."

I danced with Mary Clayton. I talked of Heniker, my beautiful mother, and Dame Jenifer's portrait. I introduced my brothers to her, and we set up a cousinly monopoly of the young lady, which lasted till they called her "sister," and I had brought to Heniker as its new mistress, a new edition of "the lady with the feather fan."

G. P.

Digitized by Google

SHORT STORIES THAT MAKE YOU LAUGH

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a Stereoscope to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, May 13th. Post-cards only, please. The prize of One Guinea has been awarded this week to Mr. W. J. Bristow, 119 Stratford Road, Plaistow, Essex, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

HE: "If I were not in a canoe I would kiss you."
She: "Take me ashore, instantly, sir."

"IF I'm not a little more careful," observed the hen, as she removed the china egg from her nest, "I shall be laying bricks next."

HE: "How high out of water that steamer is that's coming in yonder."
She: "I suppose it's because the tide is so low."

PHOTOGRAPHER: "Excuse me, sir, but you have been sitting on your hat for the last ten minutes."
Customer (furious): "Well, why in thunder didn't you tell me before?"
Photographer: "I wished you to look pleasant, sir."

AN American visitor to Ceylon, desiring to have a bathe, asked a native to show him a place free from crocodiles. The native took him close to the mouth of the river, where the American enjoyed a refreshing dip. On coming out of the water he inquired of his guide how this particular spot happened to be free from crocodiles.
"Crocodile 'fraid of shark!" replied the Cingalese assuringly; "too many shark here!"

THERE was once a Scotch farmer famed for his strength, who was often challenged by people from all parts of the country who had heard of his reputation.
One day there arrived from London a well-known amateur pugilist. Finding the Scot working in a field, he dismounted from his horse and said:
"Friend, I have heard a great deal about you, and I have come a long way to see which of us is the better wrestler."
Without saying a word, the farmer seized him round the waist, pitched him over the hedge, and quietly resumed his work.
The pugilist slowly gathered himself together, and when fairly on his feet, the farmer asked if he had anything more to say to him.
"No," he replied, "but perhaps you would be so good as to throw me my horse."

STRANGER (to sexton): "Would you kindly sew me into a sheet?" He meant, of course, "show me into a seat."

SHE: "That was such a funny story you told me yesterday about a donkey, Mr. Griggs."
He: "Do you think so?"
She: "Yes, indeed! After this, whenever I see a donkey it will remind me of you!"

MISTRESS: "Do you think that young Policeman Keegan, who calls here so often, means business, Norah?"
The Cook (blushing): "I think he do, mum. He's begun to complain about my cooking already."

OLD INHABITANT (loafing at Cross Roads grocery): "Talkin' about crop failures, I remember a time when people had to eat up all the farm stock and then live on the fodder wot they had saved fer the cattle."
Older Inhabitant: "Huh! That's nothin'. Why, I recollect the time when provisions got so scarce that the starvin' farmers hed to go out an' shoot an amatoor sportsman fer dinner, an' then cook him with the wood from the 'Trespassers will be prosecuted' signs."

* A QUACK doctor stood on his waggon at a street corner selling his "cure all." A group of people gathered about him, and he undertook to explain to them the anatomy of the throat.
"My dear friends," he began, "perhaps you don't know it, but there are two passages that go from the back of the mouth to the stomach. One is called the œsophagus and the other is the œsophagi. Now, the solid victuals goes down the œsophagus and the liquids down the œsophagi. Over the top of the holes is a cover with a hinge in the middle, and when you swallow beefsteak the little door over the œsophagus flies open and the little door over the œsophagi drops down, and *vice versâ* when you take a drink of coffee."
This description proved too much for a farmer who stood on the edge of the crowd. Shaking with laughter, he remarked in a loud tone:
"Gosh, but those doors must go flipper-flopper when feller has bread and milk."

Digitized by Google

The Caller: "How do you like your new doctor?"
Mrs. De Style: "Oh, he's far superior to the other one. He really thinks there is something the matter with me."

"Doctor," said the anxious woman. "isn't there a somnambulism germ? I want one for my husband if there is. He's so busy at his desk all day long that he is being ruined for the lack of exercise. I thought if we could make him walk in his sleep it wouldn't be a bad idea."

The burglar entered the author's house at midnight, and was disturbed by the awakening of the occupant of the room.

Drawing his revolver he said: "If you stir you are a dead man! I'm hunting for money!"

"Let me get up and strike a light," said the author, "and I'll hunt with you."

A story is told of a British soldier in the Transvaal. His colonel, observing him one morning wending his way to camp with a fine rooster in his arms, halted him to know if he had been stealing chickens.

"No, colonel," was the reply, "I just saw the old fellow sitting on the wall, and I ordered him to crow for old England, and he wouldn't, when I confiscated him for a rebel."

We know a man who has a mania for collecting all sorts of queer facts in history, science and so forth; but his wife has no sympathy with him in this direction.

The other evening he laid down his paper.

"That's odd," he said to her.

"What?" she inquired.

"The statement that it would take 12,000,000 years to pump the sea dry at the rate of 1,000 gallons a second."

She thought over the statement profoundly for a full minute, and then innocently asked:

"Where would they put all the water?"

In a trial at Winchester recently an amusing incident occurred through the witness, who interlarded his conversation to a great extent with "says he," or "says I," and the court could not understand what he meant.

The Judge took him in hand with the following results:

"My man, tell us exactly what passed."

"Yes, my lord, certainly. I said I would not have the pig."

"Well, what was his answer?"

"He said he had been keeping the pig for me, and that he——"

"No, stop—he did not say that. He could not have said that. He spoke in the first person."

"No, my lord, I was the third person who spoke."

"I mean this—don't bring in the third person—repeat his exact words."

"There was no third person, my lord, only him and me."

"Look here, my good fellow, he did not say he had been keeping the pig, he said, 'I have been keeping it.'"

"I assure you, my lord, there was no mention of your lordship at all. We are on two different stories, my lord; there was no third person present, and if there had been anything said about your lordship I must have heard it."

Jack: "Who is that fine-looking girl that just bowed to you?"

Tom (gloomily): "Oh, she's my sister."

Jack: "Why, old chap, I wasn't aware that you had a sister."

Tom: "I didn't know it myself until last night."

Chicago Millionaire (showing his library to distinguished novelist): "See them books?"

D. Novelist: "Yes."

C. M.: "All bound in calf, ain't they?"

D. N.: "So they are."

C. M. (proudly): "Well, sir, I killed all them calves myself."

Mother: "Johnny, you said you'd been to Sunday-school."

Johnny (with a far-away look): "Yes, mother."

Mother: "How does it happen that your hands smell fishy?"

Johnny: "I—I carried home the Sunday-school paper, an'—an' th' outside page is all about Jonah and the whale."

A good story is told of a man named William Potts, who is engaged as a window-cleaner at a certain big hotel in London.

One morning, William, instead of doing his work, was amusing himself by reading the paper, and, as bad luck would have it, the manager looked in.

"What this?" he said.

William was dumfounded.

"Pack up your things and go," said the manager.

So poor William Potts went to the office, drew the money which was owing to him, and then went upstairs and put on his Sunday clothes.

Coming down, he went to say good-bye to some of the other servants, and there he happened to run across the manager, who didn't recognise him in his best coat.

"Do you want a job?" asked the manager.

"Yes, sir," said William.

"Can you clean windows?"

"Yes, sir."

"You look a handy sort of a chap. I only gave the last man twenty-two shillings, but I'll give you twenty-five."

"Thank you, sir," said William; and in half-an-hour he was back in the same old room, cleaning the window this time, and not reading the paper.

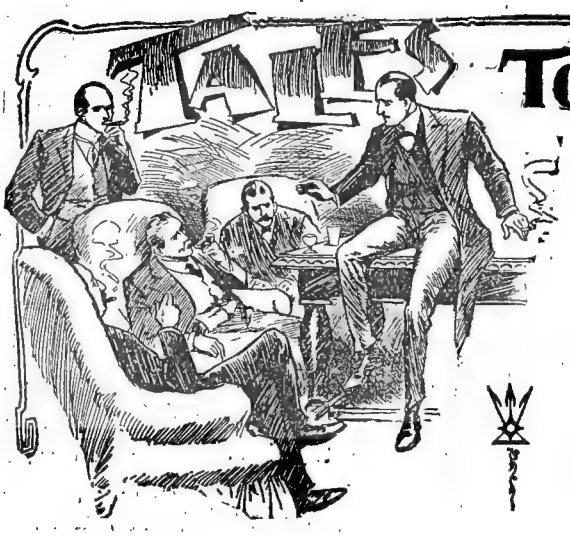
YOUR EDITOR AS A PRIZE.

THE MOST REMARKABLE COMPETITION . . EVER DEVISED. . .

The Editor of SHORT STORIES will offer his heart and hand to one of his lady readers! He will marry her!

LOOK OUT FOR FULL PARTICULARS, WHICH WILL APPEAR SHORTLY.

Digitized by Google



TOLD OFF DUTY.

[You probably don't know the "Stand-Easy" Club. It isn't in the directory, and you might live next door to the place for years without knowing of its existence by that name. It isn't a conventional club; there is no subscription, and there is no register of members. It is merely a room in a quiet, orderly, and select hostelry in Westminster, where, by common consent, a number of officials of all kinds meet when "off duty." There you may find detectives from Scotland Yard, near by; firemen, commissionaires, a soldier or two, and maybe a doctor from St. Thomas' Hospital or elsewhere. A motley crowd they would be if they wore their uniforms, but at the "Stand-Easy" uniforms are a rarity, "mufti" being the unwritten rule. The result is a gathering of quiet, well-behaved, and well-dressed men. Saturday night is the time when one sees the biggest muster, for then it is the custom for one member to regale the company with a story, the story being, as a rule, an account of some incident in the teller's own career.]

BOX 72.

THE SIGNALMAN'S STORY.

"It isn't often," said Joe Aldridge, one of the original members of the "Stand easy," "that a signalman's experience has anything particularly romantic or thrilling about it. It happened once in my life, however, that I was a principal actor in as terrible a tragedy as ever took place on any line of railway in the world—much less in the United Kingdom.

"That's a big order, but it's a fact (and facts, they say, are stubborn things), and as I suppose it's my turn to run the 'special' to-night, why, I'll tell the story, and leave you all to be the judges as to its worth and probability."

"One minute, Joe!" some one interrupted him, "this yarn of yours; it is a personally conducted job—no 'bogie'?"

"Nothing 'bogie' about it," said Joe, a trifle warmly, but keeping his temper, "except the wheel arrangement of the train that comes into it."

"Oh, all right! I didn't mean anything—go ahead!"

"It was when I was in charge of Box 72, in the great cutting between Eynsford and Sevenoaks.

"Every traveller on the Chatham and Dover knows this wonderful open passage clove out of the Kentish chalk. Its scarped, rugged sides (here and there touched with green), rise in some cases to fifty or sixty feet above the 'track' level, the top on either side being in many instances crowned with a tangled growth of thicket and copse.

"No. 72 signal-box was at the bend of the cutting, immediately before you sight Otford Station—maybe a mile.

"It was a lonely, eerie sort of a place, so that, somehow, I was always glad when the time came for relief.

"Harry Sargent, the other signalman, was a strange chap; morose and surly to a degree that made me sometimes to feel that I was especially lucky in seeing so little of him. Harry lived in Otford, a little, old-fashioned, out-of-the-world Kentish village, situated in the heart of the garden-county.

"I lived at Eynsford myself, and as it was a goodish step, I generally managed to get a lift up or down on one of the few trains that stopped at Otford. When I walked, which was rarely, it was along the 'six-foot' way.

"Harry Sargent was married to the prettiest girl in all that part. What Jessie Dyer could have seen in him is a mystery to me to this day. I can only put it down to the contrariness peculiar to some women, that makes them to do just the opposite to that which they ought to have done, and which it was safely expected of them that they would do.

"I am an old bachelor, and am likely to remain so, but I could quite understand and appreciate Jessie's position as Harry Sargent's wife, and by consequence sympathized with her, though unfortunately that could not do her much good, poor girl!

"Still, the most that could be said of her husband was (so far, that is, as I knew), that he undoubtedly drank more than was good for him and—made a book.

"Now, that last is a thing that I'm fair set against. Gambling, of whatever shape it be, may be a noble, spirited form of sport, (so-called), from the winner's point of view; but if Harry's might be accepted as a specimen of a betting-man's home, then am I content to go on my way, unpersuaded, and unbewitched.

"I did not know the whole truth with regard to the other till one day in the early summer of '97, when, having a day's leave, I decided to visit some old friends at Otford.

"This necessitated my being on night duty for two nights; an important fact to remember, in the light of what follows.

Digitized by Google

"The 'Bull' inn, Otford, is a quaint old place; red-bricked, stained, weather-beaten, and—cosy.

"Feeling thirsty, the day being hot, I turned in for a glass of ale.

"The 'Bull's' parlour is furnished with a couple of enormous high old oak settles, ensconced in the depths of one of which I lazily enjoyed my beer and a smoke.

"By-and-by I was roused by the sound of voices, pitched in a low key, proceeding from the other settle.

"'And you think it can be done, then?'

"'Done! Yes! What's to prevent it? The fellow's a perfect "hogshead" for liquor, while I happen to know that he's far from being particular where £ s. d.'s in the question.'

"'And you're sure he's on to-night?'

"'Yes, sure; he's doing a fortnight's night-duty.'

"'Ah! that's all-right then, and settles the matter.'

"I can't exactly say why, but I couldn't help thinking that in some way I was concerned in this mysterious matter.

"Then I heard the last speaker's voice again.

"'The best thing, Derholt, is for you to meet me at 10.15 to-night in the cutling; a little distance the upside of Otford Station—say, just where the water-course runs down to the culvert at the side of the track. You know the place! I pointed it out to you yesterday from the top of the bank.'

"'Yes, I know, but look here, Rueth! Is this the only way we can work the job? Isn't there a——'

"'No, you fool! there isn't,' growled the other savagely. 'If you are afraid to risk it, say so, but as sure as you do, you'll have to reckon with me! for the sharer of my secret, if he turn coward and sneak, must, well—a word to the wise.'

"As yet I had seen neither of the twain, but this last utterance of one of them, told me pretty plainly what manner of men they were; and made me see, as clearly, that a desperate game was on the board, and that in some way, I was to have a hand in it.

"The scheme, whatever it was, certainly had the line for its base; and was, as certainly, to have its carrying out that night some time after half-past ten.

"The men, evidently, were under the impression that Harry Sargent would be on duty; as in the ordinary course he would have been, the description of the man they referred to fitting my relief to a tee.

"Of my temporary change of duty they were quite ignorant, and if I was to defeat a nefarious plot of any kind, it could only be by leaving them in that blissful state.

"With this end in view, I noiselessly edged myself along the settle-seat, towards the wall end of it, and managed to get down well behind the massive arm rest.

"At this moment, just when I had safely executed my manœuvre, the men rose, and came out into the room, and full into my view. It was impossible that they could see me, as I was not only hidden by the screen end of the settle, but was also well within the deep shadow of the great fireplace.

"'To-night, then, at a quarter past ten,' said Derholt.

"'Better make it ten sharp,' returned the other, 'on second thoughts, for our man may be troublesome, and need, perhaps, a little more persuading than we have calculated upon. Yes, make it ten.'

"'So be it,' and the man Derholt went out, leaving his companion, who occupied himself for the next five minutes in deliberately choosing a choice cigar from out of a handsome gold-mounted case, and preparing it for use, to his own devices.

"He was a middle-aged man of good appearance, well-dressed, and of an easy assurance of manner. From what I could see of his face, I did not favour it much, the eyes being decidedly shifty and cold, while his mouth had a hard, cruel look about the corners, not by any means pleasant to see.

"I had not so good an opportunity of studying his companion, by reason of his speedy departure, but I saw enough to give me a passably fair idea of his general personality.

"Evidently he was not on a social level if on the same moral plane with his friend Reuth, who, however great a rascal he might be, was without doubt a man of education and refinement.

"'Joe, Joe! Let me in!' It was Jessie Sargent's voice, and, sure enough, when I opened the door, there stood, or rather crouched, my mate's wife."

"Derholt—short, squat, and coarse-featured—carried his credentials in his face and bearing. Still, of the two, I should, at a pinch, be inclined to put faith in him rather than in the varnished scallywag.

"My experience has been but humble and limited, but, such as it is, it puts its finger on the educated genteel criminal as being a far more dangerous factor to deal with than the rough-and-ready 'professional' of the slums.

"But to my tale.

"His cigar lit to his satisfaction, his 'little bill' discharged, Mr. Reuth lounged nonchalantly out of the room and from the house.

"I watched him from the window saunter down the

Digitized by Google

road; and then made the best of my way to the station to catch the 2.37 for Eynsford.

"I was due for night relief at eight o'clock, and wanted a cup of tea, and a snatch of sleep before going on duty.

"I dropped a word, while waiting for my train, with the stationmaster at Otford; but he was disposed to be-little the value of my information.

"'It's just a meetin' for private purposes,' said he, 'nothing in the world else, and they choose the line because it's quiet, I suppose. There's nothing to worry about, Aldridge; I'm willing to take the blame, if any, so make your mind easy, man.'

"But that's just what I couldn't do, and I hurried home from Eynsford Station in no enviable state of mind.

"Do you think I could sleep? No! not a wink could I get. I was becoming more and more convinced that mischief was intended with regard to some particular train.

"My brain whirled and whirled with trying to put life into my thoughts.

"Then it flashed upon me!

"There was a slow train from Sevenoaks for London, which would pass through Otford at 11.7. A quarter-of-an-hour after that (11.23, if it was to time, which it usually was), the Hastings' up-express was due to pass my box.

"It was quite clear to me now that some villainy was afoot in connection with one or other, or both of these trains.

"This idea possessed me so strongly, that, once fixed in my brain, I made short work of everything at home, and started excitedly for the cutting well before six.

"I would leave no stone unturned, to circumvent, if possible, the working-out of what I believed to be a diabolical plot. As a first step towards this end I determined, therefore, to get Sargent out of the box as early as I could, and send him home out of harm's way. I could easily effect this, as there was no regulation forbidding an early relief whatever there might be with regard to a late one.

"On reaching the box, I found Harry in anything but a sober state; and whether it was my fancy or not, he seemed to me to be disturbed at my unexpected appearance.

"'Hullo! matey! What's up? Ain't time yet for changin' guard!' (He had been in the Army.)

"'No,' I replied, 'it isn't; but I can't, somehow, sleep in the daytime; and so, feeling a bit restless, I thought I'd let you have the benefit of it, and come on.'

"'Oh! I don't mind—what d'you think!'

"'That's all-right, then!' said I, 'and you'll be able to have a jolly good long evening at home.'

"'Shall I?'—he said, with a leer, and a hiccough, 'Shall I?—don't you be too sure of that, my boy, p'raps I shall, and, maybe, p'raps I shan't.'

"'That's your business' I observed, indifferently, 'you're big enough to manage your own affairs!'

"'Of course I am!—Well; since you will have it, I'll be off. Good-night, Joe!'

"'Good-night! Harry!'

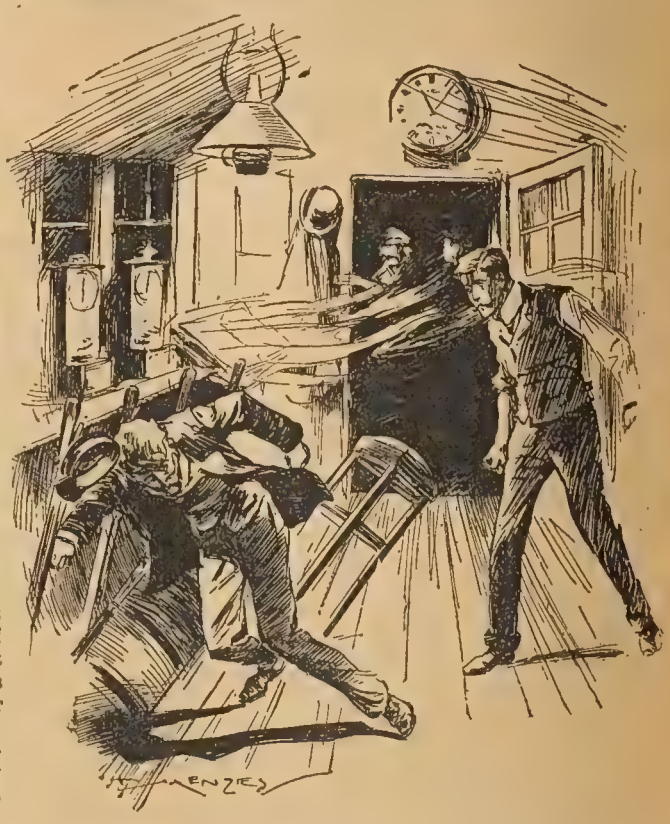
"Now, I had it all to myself.

"There were only five levers in the box, quite sufficient to work the 'in,' and 'out' signals for Otford station, and the special 'block' signals.

"There wasn't, therefore, much to do in the ordinary way, although, Otford being a junction, there was enough to keep one wide awake right through one's spell of duty.

"I did not look for any interruption till after ten o'clock, but my suspicions that somehow wouldn't be drowned kept me on the alert and watchful.

"It must have been about half past nine, when I heard what I took to be someone (a woman it seemed by the voice) calling me by name, and trying to turn the handle of the box door.



"Before we could plainly see the would-be thieves, a report rang out from the deep shadows of the open doorway, and Harry, with a cry like that of a dying lion, fell face forward in a heap among the levers."

"It was my usual practice to turn the key inside. I could, and can give no reason for this, beyond, maybe, the instinctive desire to keep out unwelcome intruders.

"'Joe, Joe! let me in! let me in!'

"It was Jessie Sargent's voice, and, sure enough, when I opened the door, there stood, or rather crouched, my mate's wife.

"The night had come over dark and wet; and she was soaked with rain; while her hair was dishevelled by the wind, that swept in fierce, snappy gusts, up the cutting.

"'Come in, Mrs. Sargent!' said I, startled to see her at such an hour, and in so woeful a plight. 'Come in! Whatever has brought you out a night like this?'

Digitized by Google

"I put to the door as I spoke, and drew out a small stool upon which she sank, panting, and completely exhausted.

"'Now,' said I, when she seemed a trifle more collected, 'is there anything wrong?'

"'Joe,' she said, not heeding my question, but asking me another. 'Where is Harry? They tell me that he left here at twenty past six.'

"'Hasn't he been home?' I said, as soothingly as I could; though I had a strong m sgiving that my precautions were doomed to failure, and that the pair of schemers had succeeded in get ing hold of Harry sometime between now and the time he left me.

"'What is it, Jessie?' I said again, (I had been her playfellow in childhood, and later would have been something dearer, but—Harry came along, and I had to stand aside). 'What is it? It must be something serious to upset you in this way.'

"'It is—it is, Joe!' she wailed; and then she sobbed as if her heart would break.

"'Then tell me all about it,' I said, 'and we'll see what can be done.'

"Her tale, told in piteous fashion, only confirmed my worst fears.

"Sargent, it appears, instead of going straight home, had turned into the 'Bull,' remaining there more than half-an-hour. He must then have taken a wide circuit, for the next place where he was heard of was by the barn of Broadmead Farm, which lies on the road leading to Dunton Green.

"It was quite by accident that Jessie heard of her husband's early relief from duty (the porter on his way home from the station told her), so that it was only natural that she, knowing his failing, should be uneasy at his non-appearance at eight o'clock.

"She had nothing to tie her to the house, so determined to go in search of him.

"Jim, the porter, had said that he had heard of him at the 'Bull,' she need not therefore make any inquiries at the inn. There were two routes she could take—the one almost a straight road from the station; the other, the roundabout way by Broadmead.

"It must have been instinct that prompted her to follow the latter; for assuredly it would have been, in the ordinary course of things, the more unlikely of the two.

"By the time Jessie arrived at Broadmead barn end, it was quite dark, the rain and the wind having it all their own way.

"Up one side of the barn is a narrow path, approached by a stile, and leading back, across the fields, to Otford again.

"A few yards up this path is a lean-to shed for the shelter of cattle. The interior of this was dark as pitch; but Jessie's ear, anxiously strained to catch every echo even, detected the sound of men's voices, in fairly loud conversation, as proceeding from it.

"Crossing the stile, she crept noiselessly along by the barn side to within a yard or so of the shed.

"'It's all very well,' someone was saying, 'but this securing of young Sargent doesn't help us one bit that I can see. We've got that fellow Aldridge to tackle now, and he's a level headed customer, not so easy to bowl over, or I'm very much mistaken.'

"'Derholt!—you're an ass! You ought to know me by now I should think; and that I never call "time" to any one man, whoever he is!'

"'Oh! that's all right; but you'll find that this Aldridge is a tough one, and one that it will take us all our time to manage.'

"'Well, it's got to be done,' impatiently snarled the other, 'and all the talk in the world won't shunt me off the job. The thing's as easy as "kiss your hand." The slow train carries, as we know, the box of "five thousand in gold," from the Sevenoaks bank. The Hastings' express, by just a failure to operate the right signal lever in Box 72, smashes into it, the catastrophe being our opportunity. It's all as plain as—wa'er.'

"'There's one thing you haven't thought of, though,' said Derholt, 'and that is, that Sargent, half-drunk as he was when he left us just now, may go back on us at the last minute, and spoil everything.'

"'I don't think he will,' said his companion. He hasn't the gumption. Besides, the pound or two he's got on account, with the prospect of the bit more he's to get when t ie job's done, will keep him quiet. He'd had just enough, I take it, to make him stand his ground with this Aldridge, and insist on resuming his proper duty. If he's funked it, and not gone near the place, why, there'll be nothing else except for us to tackle the "gentleman in charge."'

"'As,' said Jessie, 'I heard them moving directly after that, as if they meant to leave the shed, I quietly slipped back over the stile, and ran all the way 'till I dropped on the box steps.'

"It was now on the stroke of ten, and Sargent had not paid me the visit that he had led his rascally friends to believe that he would pay. There was every prospect, therefore, that I might expect at any moment to have to try conclusions with the two conspirators themselves.

"But I must first get rid, somehow, of Jessie. She, poor girl, must not be mixed up in any struggle that might take place, if I did my duty as I intended to do.

"Wrapping her up therefore, as well as I could, I opened the door, and helped her up the steep flight of ladder steps that scaled the chalk at the rear of my box. Once on the top, there was a seldom used path, skirting Fermer's Copse, which would bring her home in less than a quarter of an hour.

"What then happened, after that I had shut myself inside, may be told in very few words; the fewer the better, for I have no particular relish for the memories they must necessarily call up.

"It may be asked why I did not seek assistance from Otford. The answer is easy. The wire connecting my instrument with the main telegraphic current had, it was afterwards ascertained, been nefariously cut, while it was manifestly impossible for me to leave my box. That the stationmaster at Otford should contemptuously ignore my early warning was no fault of mine, so that I had nothing for it but to meet the crisis in my own person, and as best I might.

"The first intimation I had of coming trouble was about 10.45, when, having occasion to look intently through the window on to the line to see if the headlights of the Tunbridge train, then due, were visible, I saw a man's face pressed against the glass on the outside.

"I knew that my hour was come.

"In less time than it takes me to tell it there was a terrific blow on the door, which literally tore it from its hinges.

"I was provided with a revolver (for emergencies such as the present) and stood with my back to the Otford side of the box, facing the door, prepared for the inevitable onslaught.

Digitized by Google

"But the cowards saw the weapon, I suppose, and changed their tactics, for in less than a minute a crash of glass behind me was followed by a smashing blow on the back of the head that rendered me oblivious of everything for the time being.

"As I fell, I heard in an indistinct sort of way, the Tunbridge train rush by. Mercifully, the down line was clear, so that it would reach Otford safely.

"It might naturally be supposed that, the signalman handicapped, the villains would have a free hand and a terrible train disaster certainly result. That it was not so, was due, I venture to think, under Providence, to my good constitution, and power to throw off anything short of complete disablement.

"The two men must have left me under the impression that I should probably remain unconscious for several hours. They had blocked the up line to the 11.7 Sevenoaks train, by making fast the lever. This I discovered when I came to at three minutes past eleven.

"I, of course, felt weak and nerveless, as who would not, but I managed to restore the signal to its normal position, and to clear the line.

"You see, the scoundrels had calculated that the Sevenoaks train would, on seeing the signal against her, pull up just round the curve. This would consequently prevent the driver of the Hastings' express from seeing the tail lights, and as the clever pair had provided for a quick change of signal a few seconds before the appearance of the express, the full result of such an arrangement may be readily imagined.

"But it was not to be.

"I had hardly pulled the lever when, punctual to the minute by my clock, the Sevenoaks train ran by. As I anticipated, Reuth and his confederate lost no time in seeking revenge.

"But they reckoned without their host.

"The first man to cross the threshold was neither Reuth nor Derholt. It was Sargent, who burst into the box, his eyes ablaze, his whole face aglow with passion.

"'Joe!' he cried, 'they're on you! But I'll stand by you! You shan't say I left you in the lurch. Here they are!—look out!'

"And they were.

"But the end was close at hand now.

"Before we could plainly see the would-be thieves, a report rang out from the deep shadows of the open doorway, and Harry, with a cry like that of a dying lion, fell face forward in a heap among the levers.

"What would have been my fate, had no assistance arrived, it is not difficult to conjecture. It seems that the wind set in the direction of Otford; and that the stationmaster, hearing a faint sound of pistol shots, and convinced at last that something was wrong, decided to inquire at once into the matter.

"Collecting half-a-dozen labourers from a siding, he made for my box, getting there just in time to save me and to secure Reuth and his ally.

"The worst part of the whole affair was the death of poor Harry, who succumbed an hour later. I shall never forget his wife's agony of mind. She will never be again the same woman. Her future life is buried in her husband's grave.

"Reuth, as having fired the shot (his companion proved that), paid the capital penalty; the other, curiously, died between trial and sentence.

"I took a great dislike to my old sphere of duty, and someone else now reigns in 'Box 72.'"

There are over 70 designs of the latest novelties in shirts and blouses in

"Shirts and Blouses."

(No. 4 Isobel's Needlework Series.)

Price 2d. **Of all Newsagents.**

SIXPENNY EDITIONS
OF
FAMOUS NOVELS.

JUST PUBLISHED.

THE SKIPPER'S WOOING.
By W. W. Jacobs.

"Irresistibly ludicrous."—*Spectator.*

"A good story, well told, and full of humour and drollery."—*Daily Telegraph.*

ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE.
By C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne.

THE INVISIBLE MAN.
By H. G. Wells.

THE MASTER KEY.
By Florence Warden.

At all Railway Bookstalls, Booksellers, and Newsagents; or Post Free for 8d. from the Publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

THE BEST SIX-SHILLING NOVELS TO READ.

A HONEYMOON IN SPACE.
By George Griffith.

THE TAPU OF BANDERAH, and other Stories.
By Louis Becke and Walter Jeffery.

'TWIXT DEVIL AND DEEP SEA.
By Mrs. C. N. Williamson.

THE STRANGE WOOING OF MARY BOWLER.
By Richard Marsh.

THE INVADERS.
By Louis Tracy.

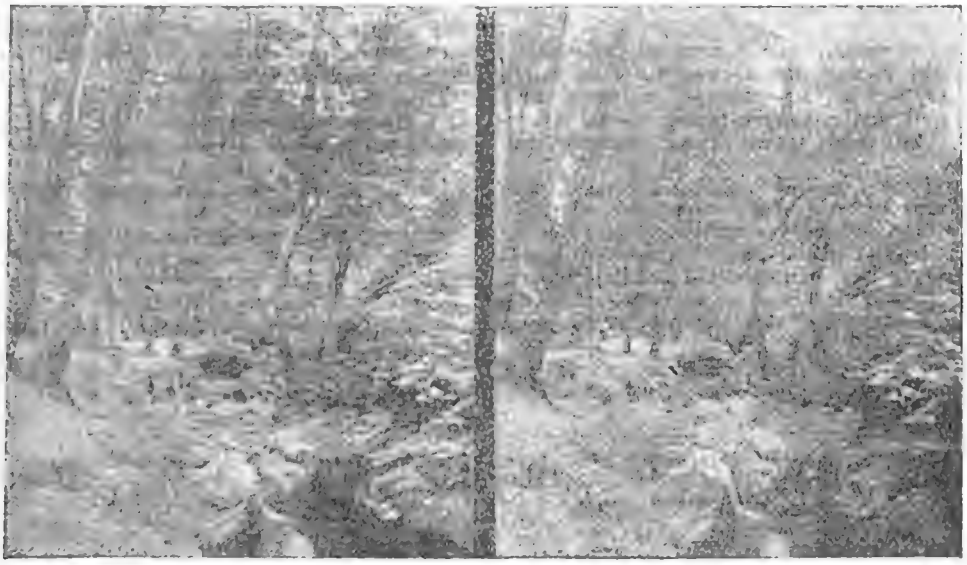
THE SENTENCE OF THE COURT.
By Headon Hill.

MORD EM'LY. 3s. 6d.
By W. Pett Ridge.

London: C. ARTHUR PEARSON Ltd., Henrietta Street, W.C.

Digitized by Google

Our Stereoscopic Gallery.



An English Woodland Scene.

"Resting."

Readers will be pleased to hear that we are now giving away Stereoscopes in connection with our WEEKLY POSTCARD COMPETITION.—See page 588.

Digitized by Google

ROY McKINNON'S FRIEND.

JAVA astern; the Indian Ocean ahead, and perfect weather.

There was just enough breeze to send the *Kestrel* along seven or eight knots; and as everybody on board her, from skipper to boy, seemed possessed with the happy-go-lucky, go-as-you-please spirit, everybody was, by consequence, quite content and comfortable.

The *Kestrel* was a teak-built sailing barque of some six-hundred tons burden; and of the old-fashioned "tub" order. That is to say; she was "full-and-round" in her lines just where she should have "raked—in" and—"home." She, in fact, developed the plodding "pound ahead" qualities of the bull-dog, rather than the more-to-be-desired "beam" and "counter" of the greyhound.

When I say that everybody on board was afflicted with this *dolce far niente* disease, I am, perhaps, a trifle over-pessimistic.

Roy McKinnon, the mate, was certainly an exception. This was his first voyage in the ship, and it must be confessed that at a very early period of the trip he had contracted a feeling of deep disgust with regard both to the vessel and her commander.

Roy was a smart seaman, an A.1 navigator, and a fine specimen of British manhood.

He had served his apprenticeship in a certain famous Mediterranean steam line. In this employ he had remained for nearly eleven years, until, in fact, he had passed for "chief."

Then, having no outlet for his superfluous energy (the Service being, in many respects, limited), he decided to seek a wider experience, and as the position of first officer of the *Kestrel* offered the desired opportunity, he applied for, and obtained it.

From the day he went aboard, he saw that there would be a clashing of interests, but as articles had been signed, there was no loophole of escape, nothing to do but to make the best of it.

It was not until their fourth day at sea, that Roy made a discovery, which, he then little imagined, was destined to have a marked influence upon his share of the events of the next six months.

This discovery was nothing less than the presence aboard of the Captain's daughter.

It seems that she had been keeping her cabin through indisposition; not a soul, forward or aft, except the steward, having the slightest suspicion that the port state-room was occupied by a lady.

Secrecy in the matter was accounted for by the existence of a regulation of the owners', which ran, "that in no case are ships' masters in this employ to carry with them, as passengers, or otherwise, on board their vessels, wife, or other relative or friend, without permission given, on pain of prompt dismissal upon first possible opportunity."

As said permission was never, under any circumstances, accorded, it naturally followed that to deliberately break the rule, was to risk loss of ship, and, that which was far more serious, loss of professional reputation.

Roy McKinnon, of course, was aware of all this, but, like a wise man, elected to mind his own business; leaving the skipper to look after his own.

Then, the inevitable happened.

From the date of the discovery, right up to the day first referred to, a process was silently going on in the hearts and minds of these two young people that could have but one conclusion.

Captain Seymour was, by reason of his habitual self-concentration, blind to it all.

He never troubled himself about things, which had no concern for himself personally. He would not have suggested, on his own initiative, that his daughter Madge should accompany him on this particular trip.

The girl pressed to be allowed to go, promising to be very discreet, and to save himself the worry and nuisance of arguing the matter, he gave his consent (reluctantly, it must be admitted), well knowing that the chances of ultimate unpleasantness were as ten-to one.

Madge never showed herself on deck in the day time, but in the first night watch she would, on fine evenings steal up to the weather side of the poop, intent upon getting a little fresh air.

At these times, whether by luck or design, watch time or below, Roy would turn up without fail, in the light of her eyes, and in the tones of her voice finding the keenest delight and satisfaction.

She was the sort of girl most men of his stamp would worship.

Not so particularly tall, her somewhat slight figure and well-poised little head gave her a winsome attractiveness Roy, at any rate, could not resist.

When the captain found that it was no use attempting to shut the eyes of his ship's company, he just let things slide, trusting to the chapter of accidents to get him out of the impending mess.

Still, he was far from being pleased with the existing state of things, as between Madge and Roy McKinnon.

Unenergetic himself, he could not but admire the young fellow's personality, his pluck, fine principles, and general devotion to duty. Yet, in spite of all this, or (he being who and what he was) because of it, he disliked his chief-officer, unreasoningly, but decidedly.

Roy had seen this from the beginning, and so left no loophole for animadversion or complaint.

The destination of the *Kestrel* was Batavia, with an open commission to touch at Pontiana, Western Borneo. At Pontiana was to be found an agent of the owners, one Sweyn Everett, who combined with his commercial duties those of British Consul, and, in a semi-official sort of way, of Political Resident at the tiny court of the local Rajah.

Sweyn Everett was no ordinary man, being strong (in a moral sense) and capable to a degree.

One of two brothers, he, the elder, had chosen this out-of-the-way corner of the earth as the field for his life-work; while the younger, Roger, entering the employ of Axtell and Bruce as gentleman apprentice as a lad of thirteen, had now become second mate of the *Kestrel*.

Digitized by Google

Roger Everett and Roy McKinnon were as unlike each other in every respect as it is possible for the men to be. But, strangely, this did not prevent their becoming friends.

Love we know is blind, but so sometimes is friendship. It was the case in this particular instance.

Intellectual, a master of keen trenchant criticism of men and things, Roger Everett irresistibly attracted the good-natured, unsuspicious, simple-minded Roy.

He seemed to lay himself out to please his senior officer, altering his manner not a jot when Roy's more than passing interest in Madge Seymour developed and increased.

For aught Roy knew, his friend rejoiced at his good fortune, and apparently played Roy's game with the skipper.

Now it is doubtful, in the light of after events, whether Captain Seymour would, of his own accord, have availed himself of the clause in his instructions giving him discretionary power with regard to visiting Pontiana. That which influenced him to do so was a conversation with his second officer a few hours after leaving Batavia.

"Yes, I know," he said in reply to a remark of Everett's. "But it'll be all right. They won't sack me just for giving my girl a little sea air! I've been too long with 'em."

"Don't be too sure of that," rejoined the other. "Now, you are aware that I am not quite without good standing at Fenchurch Street, and also, that a word from me to my brother at Pontiana will be all sufficient to make things smooth at head-quarters, with regard to this little 'breaking-the-rule' episode.

"If you continue the straight road home from here, then there's only one possible ending to it all; and that one, rather undesirable and unpleasant than otherwise."

"Yes, I know!—but—"

"A moment, please. On the other hand, put in at Pontiana, and comply with my condition—or request, rather—and your position as master of the barque *Kestrel* is in no way jeopardized, but, contrariwise, is more assured than ever."

"Well, but, look here, man! I've no authority over Madge. She's just too much for me. I can't compel her to marry you. Besides, she's over head and ears infatuated with McKinnon, and——"

"Hang McKinnon! That's nothing. Put in at Pontiana, as I say; give me your consent to my marriage with your daughter, and—leave the rest to me."

"Great Neptune! Have your own way!" snapped the skipper, the while pulling furiously at his pipe. "Only—no nonsense, you know, Everett! She's my child, and she's no one to look after her but me. I'm not so sure that if I didn't detest that chief McKinnon so, I'd as soon see her spliced to him as to anybody."

"Well! I wouldn't;" retorted Everett, a nasty look in his eyes, "and I don't mean to. Anyway, I've got your consent; and I'll take the risk—if there is any."

In the captain's cabin, during the second dog-watch, and with the door shut, it was that this precious bargain was made.

The *Kestrel* was heading for the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Suida, everyone on board imagining—none more surely than Roy McKinnon—that a straight course for home was the order of the day.

It was the chief's watch below; from eight-bells to midnight; and when, about three-bells, he was awakened by the noisy hauling on the braces, he jumped into his clothes, and ran up on deck to see the cause.

He soon found that the course had been altered and that they were running before a fair wind, for Western Borneo.

Having had no intimation of this from the skipper, Roy was not alone surprised, but also a little angered.

Everett, whose watch, of course, it was, busy with trimming sail, kept out of Roy's way, and it was only when everything was taut and ship-shape, that the mate could get a word with him.

At these times, Roy would turn up without fail.

"Hullo!" he said, "when did you get the order for going about?"

"In the second-dog—the old man has decided after all, to put in at Pontiana."

"Rather sudden, isn't it?" said Roy; "he never whispered a word of it to me when I saw him at muster."

"My dear fellow! You know the skipper, and so do I. He never does anything like anybody else. In this instance he's changed his mind, I suppose, and—well, that's all that can be said about it."

"Well, I still think that he ought to have let me

Digitized by Google

know what he was going to do," insisted Roy, rather hotly; "and I'll tell him so before I'm much older."

"I wouldn't, if I were you; he's always at his worst when he's been smoking hard all day, and he's been at it like a chimney ever since eight-bells this morning."

"Ah, well! I'll turn in again now. So long Everett!"

"So long, old chap!"

Roy had descended the companion, and was about to enter his cabin, when, out of the darkness, came a hand that laid itself lightly upon his arm, while a voice he knew only too well whispered in his ear:

"Roy! Take this—quick!"

A folded paper was then thrust into his hand.

"I'll be up on deck half-an-hour after you go on watch at midnight. Meanwhile, read this before you sleep."

Roy tried to detain her, but Madge was gone, and there was nothing left for him but to shut himself in and read the letter.

"Roy," it ran, "there is something going on that threatens to separate you and me. Roger Everett is at the bottom of it, and my father—my father, I say, Roy, is doing the other's bidding. I overheard them just before eight bells. My state-room, as you know, is next my father's cabin. Everett has some deep design, I am sure, to do you an injury, on our arrival at Pontiana. It is he who has persuaded my father to put in there. Be on your guard. I will be true! as I know you will be, dear; but don't trust your friend.

M."

Roy's first impulse was to rush out on to the "poop," and to shake the life out of Roger Everett.

Then second thoughts prevailed, suggesting caution and wariness.

Perhaps Madge, who evidently had probed the secret, would have something more to tell him later on, when he saw her.

"The miserable swab! Well, I am an innocent to allow myself to be 'hulled' by a skunk like that! But I'll be even with him, and if he thinks to get my Madge from me (for that's what he's aiming at, I verily believe) he'll have to get her through me, and I'm not quite a shadow."

There is only a matter of 250 miles between Batavia and Pontiana, and so there was every likelihood, all things being favourable, of their making the latter port about the evening of the second day.

Clearly then, if Everett was to be checkmated, there was not much time to lose.

As one bell in the middle watch sounded from the break of the poop, to be answered by the look-out on the fo'castle head, Madge stood at Roy's side by the weather taffrail.

Though the breeze was strong, the ship was steady, the yards and sails demanding no attention from the watch on deck.

Madge then communicated to Roy the fact of Everett's brother being the British Consul at Pontiana, and that it was through the influence of his relative with the native authorities that the younger brother no doubt hoped to be able to effect something that should at once make for the undoing of the chief mate, and bring about the realization of his scheme with regard to herself.

They talked long and earnestly, the stolid, silent figure at the wheel being the only other present, and making no sign.

At last, about four bells Madge suddenly interrupted Roy as he was about to speak

"I have it!" she said in a suppressed excited whisper, and, glancing round apprehensively at old Jan Olsen on the wheel-grating, whose eye never roved from an alternate conning of binnacle and canvas, "I have it! Roy! When do you expect that we shall be in?"

"At Pontiana?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is strange water to me, but I should say that, if this wind holds, we ought to make port somewhere about noon the day after to-morrow."

"Thirty hours!—or nearly, from now," she murmured to herself. "Roy!" she then said, "will you be content to remain in ignorance of that which I am going to do?"

"I don't quite know what you mean," he answered her; "only that, maybe, you will be in danger and I am powerless to help you."

"I don't think so," she said. "No I don't think so; either the one or the other. It is like this, Roy, I alone, as a woman, can carry out the plan I have conceived. With all the good-will in the world, you, dear, as a man, would assuredly risk failure, because, forgive me, Roy—you would not be able to control yourself."

"Very well, then, Madge, you shall have your way, and I—will just wait and watch."

"That's it, dear—wait you and watch, while I—work!"

At this moment Madge drew Roy's attention to the sudden appearing of a light in the second-mate's berth on the starboard side the "cuddy."

By leaning over the break-rail they could clearly see Roger Everett seat himself at his flap table, and commence writing.

Evidently that upon which he was engaged was of absorbing interest; for, as he proceeded, his pen flew faster and faster; while his compressed lips and knitted brows denoted that the subject matter of the document was, from his point of view at least, of supreme importance.

Madge was a girl of whom it might be said, that she was modesty incarnate, but when an idea, or rather a modification of her original scheme, now flashed across her mind, in connection with that which she now beheld. She herself even hesitated before the thought.

It is only with some, although perhaps with the great majority of women, that hesitation is fatal, it was certainly not so with Madge.

Hurriedly bidding her lover a temporary farewell, she left his side, and, rapidly descending the port companion, was soon in her own room.

She could see, as she passed by the "cuddy," that the second-mate was still busy writing; and the sight only strengthened her resolution.

She sat, it might have been for a little over half-an-hour, with her door ajar, and listening intently.

There was not a sound from her father's cabin, while, as for the watch on deck they were, it being fine and "steady" weather, as quiet as mice.

At half-past three she rose and, first putting on a pair of soft slippers, crept warily through the empty saloon towards the starboard door that led out on to the main deck.

Close by and outside this door, and under the starboard companion, was the second mate's berth. The light was now out, and Madge, her face white and set with stern consternation of purpose, noiselessly turned the door-handle, stepped lightly over the sill, and, without further entering the little place, stretched forth her right hand towards the flap-table, and snatched from off

Digitized by Google

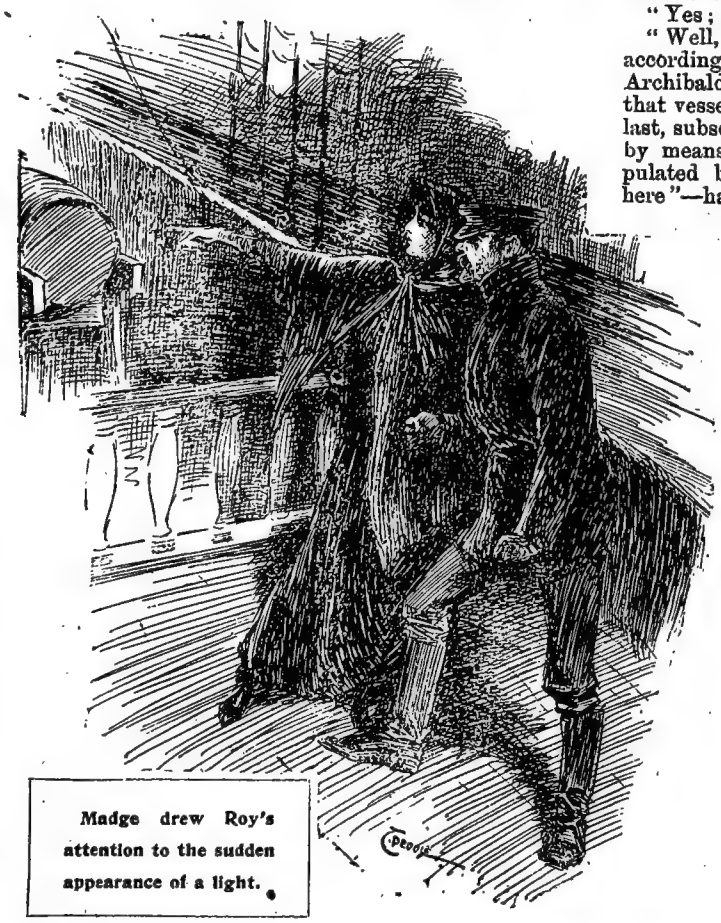
it the paper that lay there, gleaming white in the semi-darkness.

A quick straining of her ears in the direction of the sleeping Everett, and then, reassured, she gently closed the door; sped back through the silent saloon, and, gaining her own room, sank down, trembling, upon a locker-seat, the paper crushed in her clenched right hand.

* * * * *

The next day, an hour after noon, when the *Kestrel* dropped anchor in Pontiana Roads, Captain Seymour stood by the port taffrail, watching a small boat, containing three persons, pulling towards the ship.

"Captain Seymour, I believe?" said a tall, spare, soldierly-looking man, clad in white linen, approaching the skipper.



Madge drew Roy's attention to the sudden appearance of a light.

"The same; and you, sir?"

"Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, and agent for Messrs Axtell and Bruce, Sweyn Everett, at your service."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," replied Seymour, just a little constrainedly, as not being quite sure of what might be coming.

"May I see your papers, captain, if you please?"

"Oh, yes! of course! if you'll come below, I'll show them to you."

The second-mate, as is usual on arrival or departure, had charge of the ship's aft, and though at the moment of the Consul's arrival, too much occupied to greet his brother, he now entered the saloon immediately after the two other men.

Madge was not visible, she having shut herself in her room.

"Ah, Roger!" said the Consul, catching sight of his brother, "how are you, lad?"

"All right, thanks, Sweyn. But I've something to say before you tackle the ship's papers."

"Eh!" said the other, looking up sharply; "something to say? What is it?"

"This. You have power, Sweyn, haven't you, to deal with naval deserters?"

"Yes; why?"

"Well, there's one here aboard the *Kestrel*, and I accordingly make oath that Roy McKinnon, otherwise Archibald Roy, late of H.M.S. *Defiance*, deserted from that vessel some time during the month of December last, subsequently shipping as chief mate of this ship by means of forged certificates and discharges, manipulated by himself. In confirmation of this I have here"—handing a paper to his brother—"a communication from a friend of mine, an officer on board the *Defiance*, now stationed at Gibraltar."

"Roger Everett! you lie!"

Each man's eyes were fixed upon Madge, who stood in the doorway of the starboard state-room, holding an open paper in her hand.

"Hullo!" said the consul, "A lady! Didn't know, captain, you had any passengers aboard!"

"Mr. Everett," said Madge, approaching the table at which sat her father and the Consul, "I believe that man," pointing to the second mate, who stood, white-faced and gnawing his moustache, with his back to the "cuddy" partition, "is your brother. I cannot say, sir, that I congratulate you on the relationship. I wish, first of all, to say that the statement just made by Mr. Roger Everett is false in every particular. That this is so, you will see if you read this."

Madge gave him the paper she held, and waited.

Swiftly moving towards his brother, Roger Everett made to snatch the paper from him, but the Consul's grip of it was too sure, only a small corner being torn away in the attempt.

"She stole it from my cabin!" cried the baffled traitor.

"Did she?" calmly responded Consul Sweyn. "Then all I can say is that she was right plucky, while it seems to me, Roger, that for once you have stepped across the line."

"Will you give me that paper?" roared his brother.

"Certainly not, until I have read it, and not then if its contents, as Miss——" turning towards Madge and inclining his head courteously.

"Seymour—I am Captain Seymour's daughter."

"Oh, indeed! charmed to make your acquaintance, Miss Seymour. But let us see what this terrible paper contains."

Digitized by Google

"Roger Everett, you lie!"

As he read on, his features changed in expression from light good-humour to grave surprise.

"Roger," at last he said, looking his brother steadily and sternly in the face, "this is a serious matter—for you. The paper I hold in my hand, and given me by this young lady, warrants me in placing you under arrest for conspiracy and forgery; inasmuch as I am persuaded, the two copies," touching the duplicate on the table, "being identical, that the supposed Lieutenant Shannon of H. M. S. *Defiance*, has no existence, except in your own imagination. This being so, I can hardly place such faith in your statement with regard to Chief-officer Roy McKinnon, as to act upon it, or even take serious notice of it. Your motive," he here looked across at Madge, "is self-apparent, although, if you thought to gain your end by this fraudulent edging of your rival out of your way, I must write you down as being lacking to a greater extent in commonsense than I gave you credit for. Kindly send for your chief officer, Captain Seymour."

When Roy heard all, he was, though not, as we know, unprepared, righteously and naturally indignant that one, who had been professedly his friend, should have struck him so dastardly a blow.

Sent ignominiously to his cabin, Roger Everett saw plainly that he had lost not only his professional prestige, but also the esteem and affection of the only relative he had in the world.

Both Madge and Roy pleaded hard for mercy for the man, who had sought so mercilessly to injure them.

To a certain extent they prevailed, the Consul, however, insisting, as he had both, the right and power to do, that his recreant brother should at once leave the ship (his name to be taken off the vessel's books), and that he should remain on shore at Pontiana, until such time as he, the elder, should be able to arrange some sort of a future for him.

It may be said that the second and self-produced copy of the letter from the mythical Lieutenant Shannon, had been "manufactured" upon the removal by Madge of the first forgery.

With the exception of the detected schemer, the only uneasy mind aboard the *Kestrel* now was that of her commander, who, apart from the narrowly escaped consequences of his weak littleness, and almost criminal carelessness, had still the fear of reprimand, and perhaps worse, before his eyes.

But he was, after all, to be let down lightly, and considering his offence (the mere giving his daughter a free trip to the tropics) it cannot be said that he deserved aught else.

"Captain Seymour," said the Consul with a smile, a few days later, as he stood at the gangway, the *Kestrel*, her anchor hove short, shaking out her canvas for her home flight, "the little matter of the lady passenger will, I give you my word, be no more heard of, only, as the schoolmaster said to the schoolboy, 'Don't do it again.' As for Miss Madge, take my advice, captain, give her away as soon as you reach home. Mr. McKinnon won't say no, I'll swear. Ah! here she is—good-bye, my dear young lady! and take a lonely man's heart-felt wishes for your life-long happiness. McKinnon is a fortunate man to have so true and faithful a little friend—Good-bye!" Ralph Enderby.

THE KITE CRAZE IS COMING,

and everyone will want to know how to make the new kind of high-flying kite, and how to sail it—the most delightful of peaceful occupations for a summer's day. Learn all about scientific kite-flying in the

MAY PEARSON'S.

Digitized by Google

New Serial.—Start To-day.

By HEADON HILL.

Author of "The Peril of the Prince," "Seaward for the Foe," "Guilty Gold," etc.

SUMMARY.

THE steamship *Trojan* is homeward bound from the Cape. On board is Michael Standridge, who is returning to England from the Kimberley diamond fields, in possession of the "Kimberley Elephant," the largest diamond found in the colony. On the ship is his half-brother, Simon Hoathley. On the way up the English Channel the latter steals into the miner's cabin with the intention of murdering him and obtaining possession of the diamond. The miner, however, is on the alert, and presents a pistol at the intruder's head.

Michael sells his diamond for £20,000 to Messrs. Strauss and Lightfoot, whose clerk, Swinley Tasker, he discovers in an attempt to rob him of £35. Michael reads Tasker a lecture, kicks him, and departs—having made an enemy of this rascal. Reading is where Michael expects to find news of his daughter, and he purchases Kennett's Cross, a dilapidated farmhouse in the neighbourhood, this house meeting his requirements by being very secluded, and on a clay soil suitable for brickmaking.

He spends his time in making bricks, and as each batch is made he draws out from the bank a thousand pounds in gold, until at length his balance is quite low. One day Michael is thrown out of his pony-trap, and enters a house for assistance. Here he finds Cuthbert Blakesley, the cashier at the bank, and two ladies, and recognises in the younger one, to whom Cuthbert is engaged to be married, a strong resemblance to his wife.

Mrs. Bonfield is able to prove that Marion is Michael's daughter, and he promises to acquaint her shortly with the secret of Kennett's Cross. A few weeks later Marion and Cuthbert are sitting in the garden, waiting for her father, when a constable enters and arrests Cuthbert on the charge of murdering Michael.

At the inquest which follows strong evidence against Cuthbert is given. The latter also makes a statement.

CHAPTER VI. (*continued*).

"IT was perfectly true, as Inspector Dimmock has said, that I threw these articles amongst the rest of my soiled linen—I do not know whether he wishes to infer that it would have been a sign of innocence if I had worn them next day—and it is also quite true that some of the blood had found its way from my hands to the handle of the bicycle. I noticed the condition of the handle on Saturday afternoon when I was about to use the machine, and left it at home for that reason, and walked instead.

"That, gentlemen, is the whole history of my visit to Kennett's Cross, of what I did there, and of the blood stains on my linen. I have also told you why I kept silence about having seen Mr. Standridge. It is true that he did not repeat his request during the evening, but I considered myself bound by the injunction in the letter. Would to Heaven that I had disobeyed him, and kept that letter, for it would have substantiated at least a portion of my statement, but I destroyed it. By some malignity of fate I have even lost the envelope, which I did preserve—at least, I cannot recollect tearing it up. That might have helped you to believe me. As it is, I can only tell you my story, and trust to some—at present unforseen—circumstance to substantiate it before it is too late. I know no more of the fate of Michael Standridge—a man whom I liked and respected, and with whom I looked to have still closer ties—than you know yourselves."

When the prisoner stood back at the close of his narrative, there ran round the room a hum of whispered comment, in which sympathetic approval was nicely balanced with incredulity. Even some of the jury seemed to be won over by the young man's straightforward manner, till they were reminded by sterner colleagues that they had to go by evidence alone, and that what they had just listened to was unsupported by independent testimony.

The coroner was beginning to turn over his notes with a view to commencing his summing up, when Detective-Inspector Dimmock stepped forward. He had been conversing with a late arrival—a black-coated gentleman with an air of professional importance, who had entered during Blakesly's statement

"I should like to add, sir," said the Inspector, "that the premises and the road outside have been thoroughly searched, and that we have been unable to find either the body of the cat, or the trap which Mr. Blakesly says the deceased carried to the house. And I have another witness, sir," the detective added significantly. "Dr. Chain, of the Home Office, is here."

The Coroner made a motion of assent, and the celebrated analyst, whose crucibles and test-tubes have played an important part in so many great trials during the last quarter of a century, was duly sworn. He said:

"I yesterday received from Inspector Dimmock a nickel-plated cycle bell, a pair of shirt cuffs, and a cambric pocket-handkerchief. On the bell there was a congealed drop of blood, and there were smeary stains on the handkerchief and cuffs which I have no hesitation in saying were caused by blood also. At present I have only had time to subject the drop on the bell to examination. I selected this for treatment first, because the metal being non-absorbent, it offered greater facilities for analysis. I have applied the usual tests, both chemical and microscopic, to the drop, and the results were very clear and well-defined."

"The drop was undoubtedly blood?" asked the coroner.

"Yes," replied Dr. Chain, "that much was settled from a very early stage in the analysis. My examination was principally directed at diagnosing the character of the

Digitized by Google

blood. The non-absorbent metal was the greatest use at helping me to arrive at a definite conclusion, for I had a comparatively large bulk of the substance to work upon. In all my forensic experience I have seldom if ever had more favourable conditions for tracing a blood sample to its prime source."

"And your final conclusion, Dr. Chain?"

"I confidently pronounce the blood to have been shed by a human being."

The majority of the audience had failed to see the drift of the analyst's learned remarks, but the veriest rustic there comprehended the meaning of his last sentence. It meant with startling swiftness, the whole fabric of Cuthbert Blakesly's defence had crumbled into ruins—into hopeless ruins, which the cold light of science had left void and without form—unless it was the form of the gigantic lie which the prisoner stood revealed of having shaped to his own ends. And the young man's gestures and attitude were as good as a confession, the people thought. Pressing his hands to his eyes he shrank back between his two guardians, as though instinctively surrendering himself to the inevitable. As the Home Office official bowed to the coroner and retired there was not a man in the room who did not think he could truly forecast the verdict which would follow the coroner's address.

CHAPTER VII.

Theory Yields to Conclusion.

It was a verdict of "Wilful Murder against Cuthbert Blakesly." And as the crowd filed out into the lengthening shadows of the lane, Mr. Superintendent Gunning and his trusty aide congratulated each other on the neatness of their case.

"It is no use looking further on the principal charge," said the superintendent. "We have got the right party safe enough, and sorry I am for it on some accounts. What can have possessed the fellow, I wonder?"

"The fourteen thousand golden sovereigns was what possessed him, I reckon," replied the sympathetic Dimmock, "and I mean to prove that he now possesses the sovereigns. They must be hidden about here somewhere ready for subsequent removal. The money weighs over two hundredweight, and he could never have got away with that on a bicycle."

"Had he a confederate, think you?" said the superintendent.

"I see what you mean," said Dimmock, "that he may have had help in removing the money. I don't think it for a moment. It is clearly a single-handed affair. The evidence all points to that; he was seen returning alone."

"True," assented the superintendent. "Well, it is too dark to commence to-night. We will come out to-morrow and go over the ground systematically. There are plenty of hiding-places in those burrowing brick works behind the house."

"That is where we shall find the stuff," said Dimmock confidently.

At ten o'clock on the following morning, Superintendent Gunning and Inspector Dimmock drove up to Kennett's Cross in their trap, and were received by the two constables who had been detailed to sleep on the premises till the question of the missing money should have been solved or given up.

"Anything fresh, Haynes?" asked Dimmock, as he jumped to the ground, to be followed more leisurely by his superior.

"No, sir," replied the senior constable addressed; "leastways, nothing of importance. Burton thought he heard a footstep in the lane during the evening."

"You didn't hear it? No one came to the door?"

"No, sir; I didn't hear nothing, and nobody came to the house," was the reply. "I went out into the lane with my bull's-eye, but couldn't see anyone. If there was any person there it must have been a chance passer-by; but Burton is a trifle nervous—don't like being in the house with a corpse—and I think there was just nothing."

The Inspector looked contemptuously after the younger constable who was leading away the horse and trap. Having got his man safely landed in Reading jail, and being of opinion that it was a single-handed job, he at once attributed the footstep to "moonshine," and said so. Dimmock was a detective of the dogged and persevering school, who, having once formed his theory had no room for fresh ones, but pursued the original idea to the bitter end—more often than not, it is but fair to say, with success. But then mysterious crimes were not plentiful in the quiet Berkshire country, and this was a new experience. It was his practice, when he had satisfied himself that a pet theory was incapable of proof, to pooh-pooh the whole affair, and maintain that there was nothing to be discovered at all.

The inside of the house having been already overhauled, it was to the ground in the rear that the Inspector meant to devote his talents on this occasion. But first, accompanied by the Superintendent and one of the constables, he went to the only detached outbuilding that had survived the general decay—the stable at the side in which Michael had kept his pony—and here almost at the outset he made a discovery.

The place was little better than a shed, one end having been used for housing the cart, and the other, fitted with a home-made manger, for stabling the pony. The animal had been removed on the previous day, as there was no one to look after it; but a heap of fodder remained in a corner, and the soft hay bore the distinct impress of a man's form.

"We are getting warm, I believe," said Dimmock, as he called the attention of the Superintendent to the indented shape. "This is where he must have laid up before going to the house to do the trick—left his bicycle here, no doubt, for, of course, that yarn about his having been invited to call is all my eye. He never left his machine at the front gate to give himself away."

"Looks as if you were right, surely," said the Superintendent, who had great faith in his assistant's capacity.

"And that being so," proceeded Dimmock, "the chances are that the stuff is hidden somewhere about the stable. The argument runs this way; he would have to come back here for the bicycle, anyhow—with the coin on him, mind you. Well, in the first place, it must have been precious heavy, and, in the second, he would have been in an uncommon hurry to clear out and begone after a butcher's job like that. To streak it is always the murderer's first move. He would have poked his plunder out of sight in the first handy place he came to."

While speaking he had already begun to toss the hay aside in the momentary expectation of coming upon a sack of gold, but the "discovery" went no further. Then they took spades and dug up the earthen floor; they ripped off the thatch and demolished the manger; they split up the planking of the walls till the shed was a ruin, but no gold or sign of a concealed hiding-place did they find.

The Inspector began to get angry and the others despondent, but after having enunciated his reasons why the stable was likely to have been chosen, Dimmock would not give in before the building was practically razed to the ground. Then he remembered he had previously stated his conviction that the brick-kilns in the paddocks would repay a search, and fell back on that as a saving clause.

"Come along, boys," he cried, "I was a fool to be led away from my own programme. I ought to have stuck to the original idea. Let's get on and try the open; there's nothing here."

The constables were used to Mr. Dimmock's ways, and the Superintendent tolerated them in view of his utility, so that the calm repudiation of the authorship of the "stable theory" excited no rejoinder. They trooped after him docilely, and even watched with admiration, as he searched

Digitized by Google

the garden, the hedges, and the deserted brickfield from end to end, turning over the heaps of clay and peering into trench and kiln in his confidence that the prisoner had hidden Standridge's stolen hoard somewhere, whence he could subsequently remove it in safety when the hue and cry had ceased.

But the search revealed absolutely nothing. In the trenches were no marks of disturbance of the soil; the blackened kilns were ransacked in vain, and the desolate garden yielded nothing but overgrown vegetation.

The stage had arrived when, in an ordinary case, Dimmock would have begun to express disbelief in a crime having been committed at all; but with a prisoner in custody and a verdict of wilful murder presented by the coroner's jury, that was clearly impossible.

Tired and cross the three men sat down to rest at last on the brick wall which Michael had built between the paddock and the kitchen garden. Their operations had been watched from afar by a score or so of idle spectators whom curiosity had brought out from the town, and who were obliged to content themselves with a distant view of the search from the bank of the high road that, beyond an intervening field, skirted the property.

On seeing the policemen desist from their labours most of them set off to trudge homewards, but one had apparently remained, for just as the Superintendent and Inspector had produced some light refreshment from their coat-tails they were astonished to receive a hail from an individual seen through the hedge at the top of the bank.

"Good-day to you, gentlemen! May I be allowed to intrude?" was the only audible part of the request that reached them.

"Bit of cool cheek—that," commented the Inspector, taking no notice of the call. He was in just the humour to fall foul of anyone who gave him a chance.

"It must be a newspaper reporter," said the Superintendent, "no one else would have the impudence. Better go and see what the fellow wants, Haynes," he added to the constable. "We don't want it to get into the papers that the search has been a dead failure. If he is a reporter you can bring him back with you."

"And if he's anything else take him into custody for loitering on the public highway," ejaculated the angry Dimmock after the retreating constable.

But presently Haynes was seen returning from his errand alone, while the invisible one still waited at the hedge.

"He isn't a reporter," said the constable when he reached them. "He's an American detective over here on business, and, being in the neighbourhood, took an interest in the case. Says he thought, being in the same line, you would allow him to introduce himself. Sends his compliments on the masterly way the prisoner was copped."

Dimmock smirked at the flattering message, and recovered his temper.

"These Yankees are uncommon farseeing chaps," he said. "Their detectives could show some of us a thing or two. Shall we have him in, Mr. Gunning—not officially, or to interfere of course—but just to do the civil?"

"International courtesy is never wasted," said the Superintendent pompously.

"Yes, Haynes, tell the gentleman that if he will step this way we shall be pleased to make his acquaintance."

The constable again departed to fetch the stranger, who quickly found a convenient gap, and came across the field to the garden wall. He was a man of spare frame, and by no means young; but his features were so covered by huge Dundreary whiskers and an enormous moustache, that it was difficult to guess his exact age, or to gather much from his face, except that he had a peculiar twist or trick of the eye. He was dressed in a tweed suit of very loud check pattern, and on politely removing a brand-new silk hat, disclosed a luxuriant head of coal-black hair.

"That's a wig," whispered Dimmock to Gunning. "I suppose his job requires disguise."

"This is indeed a pleasure," the stranger began, with an eye for each, and in a very pronounced American accent. "I shall be able to tell my colleagues across the water that I have seen the flower of the British police on the warpath. My name, gentlemen, is Cyrus B. Keeling, of the New York Central Office; and as I was in Reading—tiresome commercial case in hand—I thought it would be wrong of me—real wrong—to miss a chance of learning something of your methods in a big thing like this. Thank you for the permit."

The implied deference was soothing after the morning's failure, and the two officials jumped down from the wall to fraternize.

When the introduction had been reciprocated, Mr. Cyrus B. Keeling put the question, which, under the circumstances, was only natural—had they unearthed the old man's dollars?

"Not yet," said Dimmock. "I've formed a strong opinion, though," and he looked knowingly at Mr. Keeling as though to invite an exchange of views. The Inspector, when in a tight place, was not above sucking another man's brains—provided he could do so with a certainty of gaining the credit of results—and he thought he might extract some happy hit from the American.

But that astute personage merely remarked, "Ah!" pronounced in a tone pregnant with suggestion. As Mr. Keeling spoke the exclamation it seemed to mean: "Of course if such a brilliant officer has formed an opinion, it is pretty sure to be the right one. I wonder if it is the same as mine, but I have no business to ask what it is. There is no presumption about me."

Dimmock was forced to be more direct.

"And what do you think of the case from the outside view, as read in the papers?" he persisted, admiring the stranger's respectful reserve, but keener than ever not to miss the chance of a cheap hint from an expert. A man who was selected for a mission across the Atlantic must be at the top of the tree, he argued to himself.

"Well, naturally that is the only point of view I could adopt," said Mr. Keeling, smiling at Dimmock, and keeping a deferential eye on the Superintendent at the same time "I shouldn't have ventured to mention it if you hadn't asked, but one thing gripped me from the start—that the cash would never be found in the house. The prisoner would have stowed it somewhere where he'd have had access—if you hadn't arrested him so smartly—and I opine he would not have access to the house."

"Not much," returned the Inspector. "There are a couple of our fellows sleeping there till we've satisfied ourselves, and he'd have foreseen that. I agree with you the coin wouldn't be inside the house. I knew that from the first, though, of course, we've looked."

The stranger's smiling eye smiled more appreciatively than ever.

"Then if I was working the case," he proceeded, "I should arrive at the conclusion—I always go plumb-centre for conclusions. There's three here, one on top of the other, till you get to the final."

"Quite so, of course, having the case in hand officially, I mustn't say much, but you may," said Dimmock, with a wink, as though there couldn't be the least doubt of what the conclusions were.

"Conclusion first—the money's not in the house for reasons stated," began Mr. Keeling, counting on his skinny yellow fingers. "Conclusion second—it's not hidden outdoors, and intelligent experts have searched for it for a whole morning without success. Conclusion third and final"—he paused a little to give effect to this point—"the money being neither hidden inside nor outside the house, it isn't hidden anywhere at all. The prisoner did the murder right enough, but he drew a blank when it came to lifting the cash—'cos why, there was none to lift. Old man Standridge had spent it all himself—blown it on the Stock Exchange, or lost it betting. You know what these gold-

Digitized by Google

miners are when they have landed a pile—real mean and miserable till they're stony broke again."

Dimmock had hard work to preserve his air of confidential mystery on hearing the final conclusion. He was delighted with it, so neatly did it fit with his exigencies, but not for the world would he have it known that he had not evolved it himself. He winked again and said:

"We're kindred spirits, Mr. Keeling—kindred spirits, I can see. What a gift it is to be able to read these little problems that are so puzzling to the ordinary mind. I am glad to have met you, sir, and hope we shall meet in the town. Are you making any stay in Reading?"

But, unfortunately for the budding friendship, Mr. Cyrus B. Keeling was leaving the town that day, and the country on the morrow, for his native "N. York," and had to decline the pressing invitations which both Gunning and Dimmock extended to him to look them up in their homes. In fact, even now he ought to be "making tracks for the depôt," and, after renewed compliments and many hopes for future meetings, he parted from the two officers and made his way across the field to the high road.

"By Jingo! it's a treat to rub against a chap with brains like that," said Dimmock as they watched the stranger's sinuous form disappear through the gap.

"Of course, I wasn't going to let on, but do you know he's just hit the idea I was about to moot to you when he cropped up? It is a clear case there has been no robbery. Standridge had made away with his money himself by spending it, and young Blakesly has shoved his head into the noose for nothing."

"If you think that, there's an end of the matter, I suppose," said the Superintendent, who was a cautious man, and would not commit himself. "We can quietly adopt that view ourselves, but I think it is a little early to make it public. Best let on for the present that we hope to trace the cash, and then we're right either way if anything turns up."

And that was the end of the police search for Michael Standridge's missing money.

In the meanwhile the recipient of "International courtesy" was bending his steps, not towards the town, but to a little wayside station four miles off on a branch line.

"The coast will be clear in a day or two," he said to himself musingly, as he plunged into a network of country lanes. "Friend Dimmock was as grateful as a monkey for an unexpected nut over the non-robbery conclusion, and the withdrawal of the garrison is bound to follow. A 'kindred spirit' he called me. What a blessing it is to have a cosmopolitan knowledge of men—and accents."

The compartment of the London train which he entered was empty, and no sooner was the station left behind than the solitary traveller justified Inspector Dimmock's title to be considered a keen observer in one respect, at any rate. He was certainly disguised. The day was warm, and the coal black head of hair quickly lay on the seat beside him, while he mopped a scantily furnished brow with his handkerchief.

"Yes," he continued to meditate, "the trip has been worth the investment, though this horrible tourist get-up did spoil a five-pound note. It will be a relief to get into unobtrusive professional black again."

And then, after a while:

"Kind of them to pull that shed down. Hay isn't exactly a plaster-cast, but still it tells tales sometimes to cleverer men than these. There may be someone else to reckon with yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

A Brave Girl's Choice.

Marion Standridge never wavered for an instant in the belief that her lover was innocent. From the moment when, stunned yet tearless she had returned to the house from the scene of his arrest in the rose garden at "The Limes," she had refused to listen to anyone who held a contrary opinion.

She had only known her father for a week, and, though she mourned his loss with genuine sorrow, the part that Cuthbert was accused of having played in the tragedy put all other considerations in the background. Mrs. Bonfield was worse than useless either as helper or sympathizer. The old lady was first hysterical and then unkind. As she recovered from the shock she began to see in Blakesly's arrest an obstacle to his depriving her of her indispensable companion, and selfishly took the worst view of his case.

It was not till after the inquest that Mrs. Bonfield found courage to let Marion see on which side she had ranged herself, and then it was more by innuendo than by direct assertion. But the half-dropped hints and suggestions were enough, and the relations between the two ladies were quickly becoming strained and uncomfortable. On the morning after the inquest they were sitting together, when Mr. Oakley, the bank manager, was announced—"to see Miss Standridge on business." As the visit was thus explicitly intended for Marion alone, Mrs. Bonfield would perhaps have shown better taste by leaving the room; but she preferred to assert her rights and remain where she was, jealously determined to protect what she considered her own interests.

"I was engaged all day yesterday at the inquest, or I should have called before," began the manager, when he had spoken a few commonplace, but none the less sincere, words of sympathy. "It is about your father's will, Miss Standridge. The document was drawn up and signed shortly after he came into these parts, and as he had no friends at that time, and was uncertain whether he should ever find you, he asked me to act as his executor. His principal reason, I presume, was that there were contingencies under which a local charity would benefit, and a local man would therefore be the most useful administrator."

"He has left his property to charities, then?" interrupted Mrs. Bonfield with an eagerness that caused Marion to look at her with pained surprise. The excitement of the last few days had broken down the silly old lady's sense of decency and restraint, and she could not conceal her selfish desire for her companion's continued dependence on her.

"Not under present circumstances," the manager replied, unfolding a paper, and handing it to Marion. "That is a copy of Mr. Standridge's will, and you will see that by it he devises to you everything of which he may die possessed. It was only failing your being discovered and properly identified within ten years of his death that his property was to go to the Reading Cottage Hospital. The latter provision has, of course, been rendered nugatory by his personal identification of you, so that you are beyond question in the position of sole legatee."

"But I understood that my poor father was robbed of his money by the villain who murdered him?" said Marion.

"Unfortunately there is too much reason to fear so," Mr. Oakley replied. "At any rate, as you know, it has not been found at Kennett's Cross. But there is still the chance that the police may trace and recover it."

"The police," exclaimed Marion, with bitter scorn, "*they* will never trace anything—least of all the murderer"

"Well," proceeded the manager, "in any case there is the freehold of the house and land, together with the sum of nearly three hundred and fifty pounds that was standing to his credit at the bank at the time of his death. It represents the balance that remained after those mysterious withdrawals, and it will be my duty to hold it at your disposal."

Mrs. Bonfield heaved a sigh of relief. Kennett's Cross she knew, had been on the market for years without finding a purchaser till Michael came, and it was practically valueless for letting purposes—would be doubly so now that it was the scene of a dreadful crime. The old farm house and the trifling amount in the bank would not suffice to make her protégée independent of her, she thought.

Digitized by Google

10/6

PATTERNS FREE.

Design No. 402.

10/6

Skirt alone, 5/6.

Carr., 5d. extra.

Allen Foster & Co.

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

PATTERNS FREE.

Design No. 400.

11/6

Skirt alone, 6/6.

Carr., 5d. extra.

10/6

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Patterns and Self-Measurement Forms Post Free. Send Post-card at once.

LADIES' COSTUMES AND JACKETS IN GREAT VARIETY.

No. 402. 10/6.

Design No. 402. 10/6.

The New Eton Costume.—A smart and fashionable Costume for Summer and Seaside wear. Made in the **Specialite Serge** and **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Grey, Fawn, Brown, Royal, Cardinal, Green, etc. (patterns post free). The smartly-cut coat has a pretty shaped collar, which is trimmed with narrow braid. The skirt is cut full and well made. Costume complete, **10/6.** Carr., 6d. extra. This costume can be ordered with the flounce Skirt for 1/- extra.

Design No. 1045. **10/6**

Design No. 1045. 10/6.

New Corded Flounce Skirt. The fashionable Costume Skirt of the Season. The Skirt is lined throughout. The flounce is about 16in. deep and trimmed round with rows of the New Cording now so fashionable. Made in the **Specialite Serge** and also in **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Grey, Purple, Green, Drab, Fawn, Brown, Royal, Cardinal, &c. Price **10/6.** Carriage, 5d. extra.

Design No. 400. 11/6.

A Fashionable Costume with the New Flounce Skirt—made in Allen Foster & Co.'s **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth.** Colours: Black, Navy, Fawn, Grey, Royal, Brown, Red, and Green (patterns free). The bodice is tight-fitting, and tastefully trimmed with braid. The Skirt is well and carefully made, and has a 16-inch flounce, which is lined linenette. An excellent Costume for **11/6.** Carriage paid, 6d. extra. The skirt by itself will be 6/6. Carriage, 5d.

Send Post-card for **Patterns, New Sketch Book for Spring Season, and Catalogue of Bargains Post Free.**

A CALL SOLICITED.

No. 400 11/6

ALLEN FOSTER & Co., THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS, 47 Golden Lane, Barbican, London, E.C.

DO GO

to your chemist or store for a bottle of

"ANTEXEMA."

The price is 1/1½, or post free for **1/3** from the Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W. It is, the most wonderful Skin Cure ever discovered. It at once allays itching, and cures every form of

ECZEMA.

A treatise on "Skin Troubles" is included.

KEATING'S POWDER

KILLS

FLEAS, BUGS, MOTHS, BEETLES.

TINS 3d. 6d. & 1/-

THE NEW BELLOWS 9d.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to IMPROVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

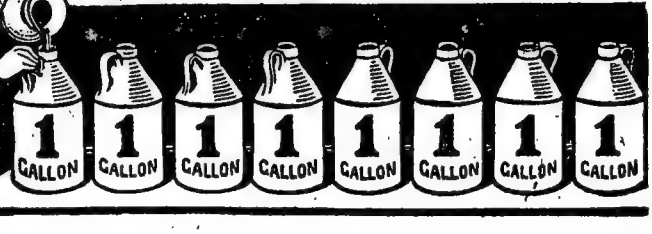
Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.,** Sole Proprietors, **66 Finsbury Pavement, London.**

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "I pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 37 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 23lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

You can make prime wholesome Beer from

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.



Good! It's Mason's.

A 6d. Bottle makes 8 Gallons.

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

Digitized by Google

"So you are not an heiress after all, Marion," she said viciously. "A father and a fortune lost to you, and yet you would fondle the hand that—"

"There, I think you had better say no more," interrupted Marion, curbing her indignation with an effort in which she was happily aided by the diversion of the bank manager's departure.

Having discharged his errand, and having no mind to stand much of Mrs. Bonfield's vapours, he rose to take his leave, and Marion, defiant in her wrath of the old lady's frowns, accompanied him to the front door. By doing so she gave Mr. Oakley an opportunity of winning her regard for ever in maintaining that, in spite of the evidence he had been compelled to give, he yet believed his cashier to be guiltless. She also became inspired with an idea, which had its consequences.

"There is something deeper here than these local wiseacres have been able to fathom," he said, as he stood on the doorstep. "The evidence at the inquest seemed to roll up against him in regular battalions—almost as if made to order—and yet I feel sure a clever brain would be able to get to the back of it. Some of it at least must be capable of innocent explanation. He simply couldn't have done it. Cuthbert Blakesly wouldn't hurt a fly."

Marion pressed his hand gratefully, and went sadly back into the house, pondering what he had said. "A clever brain," she murmured to herself. "Where am I to find such an one? And if I could, how should I be able to take advantage of it—penned up here with less freedom than the housemaid?" And all the rest of that day there rang in her ears the perpetual chorus: "A clever brain! A clever brain!"

The girl spent as much time as she could in her own room during those sad days. She wanted to avoid an open rupture with the querulous woman who, despite her selfishness, had certainly been her friend—for so long her only one. She had got so used to Mrs. Bonfield's "ways" that even now, within limits, she was willing to make allowances for her, and would have borne the mere unkindness to herself without complaint. But she would rather cut off her right hand than yield the tacit assent to the old lady's suspicions which acquiescence under present circumstances would imply.

On the afternoon of the day following the bank manager's visit, Marion had run away to her bedroom to snatch a little quiet, while Mrs. Bonfield enjoyed one of her innumerable siestas, and she had brought the newspaper with her—more from habit than because she had a mind for any news that did not concern her lover.

The inquest had been reported in the previous day's issue, so that there was nothing fresh about what had come to be known as the "Kennett's Cross case" but the negative statement that "the police were still hopeful of recovering the money which the murderer must have removed." Having already ascertained that there was nothing directly affecting Cuthbert, Marion let the paper lie unread for an hour before she took it up, and then only turned the pages idly without really heeding what her eyes rested on.

But at last a single word, staring at her from the middle of a short paragraph at the foot of a column, fixed her attention, and interwove itself into her present needs. The "item" was merely a brief statement to the effect that Zambra, the celebrated detective, had brought to a satisfactory conclusion the case upon which he had been engaged for a foreign Government, and, needless to say, there was nothing in that to interest her. It was the recollection that the name conveyed of a world-known murder mystery which had been solved by the same subtle brain a year before that made her cheeks tingle and a new light flash in her weary eyes.

"That is the man we ought to have," she exclaimed. "There is the clever brain Mr. Oakley spoke of. The skill with which he unravelled the terrible mystery of the 'Arab Javelin' almost amounted to second sight. Gladly would I give him every penny of that money in the bank if he would trace the murderer and prove Cuthbert's innocence. But how should I consult with him and see him privately here. Mrs. Bonfield would faint at the idea of a detective coming to the house, and she would never consent to my going to London for such a purpose. And would Cuthbert himself approve, I wonder."

The notion of employing the great detective took such hold of her that for the rest of that day she could think of little else, but up to bedtime she had been unable to devise a means of surmounting the initial difficulties, nor was she sure that she ought to act without first obtaining Cuthbert Blakesly's sanction. Throughout the evening, too, Mrs. Bonfield remained so irritable that it would have been more than ever useless to expect co-operation from her.

All the next day the moral atmosphere at "The Limes" continued in a highly electrical condition, but it was not till breakfast on the following morning—the fourth from the inquest—that the explosion came. After a more than usually unveiled expression of Mrs. Bonfield's suspicions, Marion started up from the table determined to bear it no longer.

"You have no right to speak to me like that about Cuthbert," she cried. "If I stay here another minute you will make me say what I should be sorry for. Even if you believe what you say—which I very much doubt—you would have been kinder to keep it to yourself. Gratitude demands a good deal from me, and I have striven to give it, but hardly that I should listen to these everlasting nagging accusations against the man I love. I shall leave your house at once."

"Oh, indeed, Miss, and pray where are you going—to live in your own beautiful country mansion, I suppose?" sneered the unpleasant old lady.

"I am going to the bank at Reading first, and shall consult Mr. Oakley," replied Marion. "If you wish to hear of my future movements you can do so through him."

Running up to her room, the girl packed her few belongings, intending to send for them later in the day, and soon came down dressed for walking. She could not bring herself to leave the house without saying good-bye to the woman whose bread she had eaten from childhood, and went to the morning-room for the purpose; but she was received with such a volley of abuse of herself and Cuthbert that she quietly shut the door again and went. Half-an-hour later Mrs. Bonfield, who judging others by her weak silly self had not thought the girl really meant to go, was lamenting in tears that she had precipitated the separation which she had wished to prevent.

In thus asserting her independence Marion was supported by the knowledge that she was not quite without the means for present subsistence. On leaving "The Limes" she went straight to the bank at Reading, and informing Mr. Oakley of the quarrel with her patroness, asked if it was open to her to draw on the funds in his hands. The will had not yet been proved, but the kindly manager at once made himself responsible for granting the facilities she required.

"And now you must allow Mrs. Oakley to look for lodgings for you in the town," he said, when the financial part of the business was concluded. "Just a bed and sitting-room, with some nice motherly person to see after your comfort."

But that was not the programme which Marion had mapped out for herself as she walked into the town. Strangely enough, it was Mrs. Bonfield herself who, in her cheap sarcasm, had suggested the course which now recommended itself in all sober earnestness.

"Thank you, very much," she replied, hesitating a little, because she knew that her project would meet with resistance, not from any faltering of purpose, "but I was thinking of another plan."

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

An Open Letter

TO EVERY THOUGHTFUL MAN AND WOMAN.

May 11th, 1901.

Dear Sir or Madam,

May I take the liberty of bringing to your notice the special offer by the "Daily Express" of "Chambers's Encyclopædia" (Twentieth Century Issue) at a specially reduced price, and upon the popular system of payment by easy instalments?

This splendid reference library has, doubtless, long been known to you; but it is possible you are not aware that the old work has just been entirely revised and corrected, and in every way been brought up-to-date. The "Twentieth Century Chambers's"—as the new work has been designated by the publishers—is incomparably the best and most satisfactory work of its kind at present on the market; in fact, it is the only truly modern Encyclopædia in the English language. May I suggest that you take this unique opportunity of placing on your shelves a work which cannot fail to prove of the greatest value to you?

You will find below full particulars of how to obtain the volumes.

Yours faithfully,

THE GENERAL MANAGER,
"Daily Express."

17 Tudor Street, E.C.

Cut Out this Application Form and post it at once with 3s. to your Bookseller or News Agent for transmission to the *Daily Express*. Or, if you prefer to send cash in full with your order, scratch out all but the line naming the desired binding, and post it to your Bookseller or Newsagent, together with Cheque or Money Order (Cloth Binding £3 15s.; with Bookcase £4 8s.; or Half Morocco £5 12s. 6d.; with Bookcase, £6 5s. 6d.) payable to the order of Lloyd's Bank Limited.

To the General Manager, DAILY EXPRESS, Date.....1901.
17 Tudor Street, London, E.C.

I enclose 3s. Please send me Chambers's Encyclopædia (20th Century Issue).

[Strike out one of these lines.]
(a) Bound in Cloth, for which I agree to make to you, or to anyone you may appoint, nine further payments of 8s. 6d. each,
(b) Bound in Half Morocco, for which I agree to make to you, or to anyone you may appoint, nine further payments of 13s. each,

my next payment upon delivery of the complete ten volumes, and my succeeding payments on the corresponding day of each month following. Until such payments are completed, I engage that the volumes remain your property, and shall not be disposed of by sale or otherwise. I further agree that if, owing to unforeseen circumstances, of which you shall be the judge, the volumes cannot be delivered, the return of this deposit of 3s. shall cancel this agreement.

[Strike out if not wanted.] Please also send me the Solid Oak Bookcase especially designed to hold Chambers's Encyclopædia, for which I agree to make one additional payment of 13s. one month after the last payment on the Books falls due.

[Signed].....
[Rank or Occupation].....
[Ba9] [Address].....

Carriage paid to any Railway Station in the United Kingdom.

The 20th Century Chambers' has neither peer nor competitor, for all other encyclopædias are made on an old and cumbersome plan. The 20th Century Chambers' alone meets the requirements of the man of this day and age. It is exhaustive, yet condensed; its information is universal, yet readily accessible; it is made for the busy and practical man of to-day, who wants complete and exact information, but is unwilling to run over a 30-page article, when the same facts can be condensed perhaps into a single page, column, or paragraph, as in Chambers'.

Digitized by Google

THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

Writing from Richmond, "T. U. C. L." tells me he is in great trouble. His health giving out, he was obliged to give up his trade (that of a carpenter), and now, after a lapse of twelve months, he has been ordered to South Africa to prevent his chest from getting worse. He expects to be able to resume work in South Africa, but knowing nothing of the country would like to have some work guaranteed to him.

I am much afraid he will find it difficult to get such a guarantee in the present upset state of the country. But since the Cape is undoubtedly the finest place for him from a health point of view, it would, I should think, be worth his while to go out on "spec." As a capable artisan, he should be able to make a comfortable living out there. And, at any rate, when the war is over building work is sure to be plentiful. I wish him a speedy recovery, and the best of luck.

❦❦❦

"P. S." (Newark) believes there are employment agencies in London which make a speciality of getting clerkships, etc., for those in need of them, and wants to know their addresses.

I should advise my correspondent to be careful in his dealings with advertising employment agencies. Genuine, some are, no doubt, but others are bogus affairs which prey on the unwary by extracting preliminary and registry fees. "P. S." should write to the London Chamber of Commerce (Employment Bureau), stating his requirements. Perhaps that might lead to some satisfactory result. But why does "P. S." want to come to London at all? The clerking profession is utterly overcrowded, and every new competitor tends to lower salaries; and living is much more expensive in London than in the provinces.

❦❦❦

"Is it possible," writes "H. G. Y." (Highworth), "for a man to put a flat piece of steel an inch wide and about eighteen inches long down his throat? We have discussed the question, one party maintaining that it *can* be done after long practice and much pain, the other that it is impossible for it to go farther than the throat, and that it is not steel, but a material which collapses that the 'swallower' uses."

I believe the sword is actually swallowed by the expert. I remember once seeing a picture showing the passage of the blade between the various internal organs. But I am not sufficiently well acquainted with the subject to speak with decision.

Since the arrival of this query Sebastian (the office boy) has been practising the feat with the office poker with somewhat dire results. Several times he has been almost on the point of choking, but still he persists.

❦❦❦

To the number of readers of both sexes who have written me recently as to the choice of a bicycle, I would suggest that they have a look at the wares of the "Silver Queen" Cycle Company, 221 Tottenham Court Road, W. The "Silver Queen" for ladies, and the "Royal Ajax" for men are machines the superior of which would be difficult to manufacture. The finest materials are used, and for grace and beauty they are unsurpassable.

❦❦❦

"Wants To Know."—Shakespeare didn't write all the common sayings you mention, though he was responsible for many. I submitted your letter to our Quotation Editor. Here is his report:

To Shakespeare we owe "All is not gold that glisters," "Make a virtue of necessity," "Screw your courage to the sticking place" (not point). "They laugh that win," "This is the short and long of it," "Comparisons are odious," "As merry as the day is long," "A Daniel come to judgment," "Frailty, thy name is woman," and a host of others.

Thomas Murgan queried long ago, "What will Mrs. Grundy say?" while Goldsmith answers, "Ask no questions, and I'll tell you no fibs."

Thomas Tasser, a writer of the sixteenth century, gives us, "It's an ill mind that turns no good," "Better late than never," "Look ere you leap," and "The stone that is rolling can gather no moss."

"All cry and no wool" is found in Butler's "Hudibras."

Dryden says, "None but the brave deserve the fair," "Men are but children of a larger growth," and "Through thick and thin."

"When Greeks join Greeks, then was the tug of war."—Nathaniel Lee, 1692.

"Of two evils I have chosen the least," and "The end must justify the means," are from Matthew Prior.

We are indebted to Colley Cibber for the agreeable intelligence that "Richard is himself again."

"Variety is the very spice of life," and "Not much the worse for wear," Cowper; "Man proposes, but God disposes," Thomas à Kempis.

Christopher Marlowe gave forth the invitation so often repeated by his brothers in a less public way, "Love me little, love me long."

Edward Coke was of the opinion that "A man's house is his castle."

From Bacon comes "Knowledge is power," and Thomas Southern reminds us that "Pity's akin to love."

Dean Swift thought that "Bread is the staff of life."

Campbell found that "Coming events cast their shadows before," and "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view."

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever," is from Keats.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 4,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

SHORT STORIES

ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
Double " " "	1 0 0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10 0 0
Half-page " " "	5 0 0
Quarter-page " "	2 10 0
Eighth-page " "	1 5 0

All spaces above one-eighth of a page are charged at per page rate.

Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, May 14th, if intended for the issue on sale May 28th, and dated June 1st. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

£5,000 PRIZES.

We Intend to Popularise Our New Magazine, THE POPULAR HOME JOURNAL, by one of the Grandest Competitions ever advertised. Most contests of skill are participated in by thousands of persons, as a result of which the prizes are few and far between, so that nobody is satisfied. We here publish a Missing Letters Competition, and absolutely agree to award a genuine warranted Watch to every competitor sending a full correct list and complying with our offer below. No concealed conditions; No Disappointment, as we tell you our plan fully beforehand. Read Carefully—

VALUABLE PRIZE TO EVERY WINNER.

NO MONEY NEED BE SENT US WITH THIS ANSWER.

By spending £5,000 in Watches, Cash, etc., we expect to gain thousands of readers. If by this and other offers we can attain a circulation of 100,000 for THE POPULAR HOME JOURNAL, we are assured of an advertising patronage which in a few years will have yielded us as much as we will have spent for prizes. If you are awarded a "Five Pound Guarantee" Twenty-one Years' Warranted Watch, we expect you to take in THE POPULAR HOME JOURNAL, or to recommend us to some friend who will take in our publication, in accordance with our offer, that we will send with prize announcement. Here are 10 Riddles. You are to supply letters in place of the hyphens to make well-known names.

1. CH-M-E-LA-N	A noted Parliamentarian.	6. B-D-N P-W--L	A South African Hero.
2. T-N-YS-N	A noted Poet.	7. B-E-H-M	A noted Pill Maker.
3. D-CK-NS	A noted Author.	8. L-V-R-O-L	An English City.
4. N-P-LE-N	A noted General.	9. TH-M-S	A noted River.
5. WE--INGT-N	Another noted General.	10. A-L-N-I-	An Ocean.

£25 EXTRA FOR QUICK SOLUTION.

Study Well And See How Quickly You Can Make All Words Possible, applicable to the definitions of the above 10 sets. To the person who can solve the entire set of solutions within 30 minutes, and who will so certify when writing, we will pay a prize of £25 in cash. In event of two or more persons doing this, the money will be divided between the winners, and an additional prize of £25 will be paid to the subscriber who makes out the correct list in the shortest time. If You Win a Cash Prize of £25 we shall expect you, if requested, before receiving the money, to certify under affidavit or by witness that you actually worked out the answers in the number of minutes you claim. You must post your set of answers within 48 hours after you solve them, marking envelope "Solution."

YOU CAN GAIN A WATCH WITHOUT DELAY.

Upon Receipt of Your List, if correct, we will award you, promptly, a "Five Pounds Guarantee Forfeiture" Twenty-one Years' Warranted, Keyless Watch, and you will only be obligated to take in THE POPULAR HOME JOURNAL for one year, so our publication may be well introduced. If the Watch is not exactly as represented you need not continue your part of the agreement, therefore you are bound to receive what you pay for. Note what you are to do to become a winner. First, Work Out The Set of Answers, keeping account of your time, and if under 30 minutes mention the exact time in your letter. Enclose your set of answers, and write your name and address plainly, also enclose two penny stamps to pay for a copy (and postage) of THE POPULAR HOME JOURNAL. Your 2 stamps will be returned (also a stamp for your postage) if you desire to withdraw after sending list without obtaining Watch and Cash Prize. By Five Pounds Guarantee, we mean £5 forfeiture if our watch is not as represented. We absolute y guarantee to award you £5 or our Watch after you send your list and name. This entire offer is Honest and Genuine, we want to please you and induce you to speak well of our publication to your friends. We hope by thes methods to attain a Great Circulation for our interesting Home Publication. Remember; it costs you nothing and you may gain a handsome Watch, and if you are quick at solving you may win the £25 in Bank of England Notes to be given at the close of the Competition. You eceive a watch in a few days by complying with our conditions. Address:—

Manager, POPULAR HOME JOURNAL, B.G., 4 Gray's Inn Road, LONDON, W.C.

DRUNKENNESS

CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

Send 6d. and secure one of our Complete Printing Outfits. Agents wanted for the above and other novelties. — Dept. Y, 89 Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.

(Really Genuine). In Patent Air-tight Tins.
½-lb., 1/4; 1-lb., 2/4; 2-lb., 4/-, including Tin & Postage.
Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, DEVON

A FREE GIFT.

500 40-EGG INCUBATORS.

Ladies and Gentlemen can greatly increase their incomes by POULTRY BREEDING, thus converting 1d. Eggs into 1s. Chickens. To encourage this industry we intend supplying each applicant during the next 28 days with one of our 40-Egg Incubators.

Write for Free Gift Form to THE POULTRY BREEDERS' APPLIANCE CO., 422 Kingsland Road, London, N.E.

JUNO CYCLES FOR LADIES AND GENTS. FREE OR FIXED WHEELS.

THE VERY BEST.
Carriage Paid. Discount for Cash.

	Monthly
£8 10s.	... 14/2
£10 10s.	... 17/6
£12 ...	... 20/-
£12 12s.	... 21/-
£14 14s.	... 24/9
£15 15s.	... 26/3

Road Racer ... £9 10s. 15s. 10d. Monthly. Write for New Season's List of JUNO Cycles and Accessories, over 100 pages, sent post free. Scorcher Brake, 1/-; Odometer, 10,000 miles, 1/6
METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO. Ltd.
Juno Cycle School & Works, 75, 76, Bishopsgate Street, Without, E.C., and Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

THE LADY'S MAGAZINE FOR MAY.

WILL BE PUBLISHED FRIDAY, MAY 10th.

ON MAY 10TH

IT WILL CONTAIN HALL CAINE'S NEW NOVEL, THE ETERNAL CITY.

YOU SHOULD ORDER A COPY AT ONCE AND READ IT.

Digitized by Google

ALL SORTS & CONDITIONS

of People in every "walk" of Life appreciate the Wonderful Powers of —

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

WORTH A GUINEA A BOX

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta-treet, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google